



## DOCTORAL THESIS

### Paths of virtue? The development of fiction for young adult girls 1750-1890

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Paths of Virtue?

**PATHS OF VIRTUE?**  
**THE DEVELOPMENT OF FICTION FOR**  
**YOUNG ADULT GIRLS**  
**1750-1890**

by

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of**

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## Abstract

This study considers the early history of the development of fiction for Young Adult girls, an area which has received little attention. Its focus is on selected novels published between 1750 and 1890 which were read by unmarried girls in their teenage years and early twenties, or recommended for them by educationalists and critics.

In the thesis I consider why girls read these novels, and how the texts address the themes identified by twentieth- and twenty-first-century theorists of children's literature as identifiers of fiction for young adults. Primary evidence is drawn from reading records and critical surveys made between the mid-eighteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Introduction puts forward the argument for investigating the origins of fiction for Young Adult girls. Part I examines the theoretical framework for the study, Chapter 1 seeking to define Young Adults girls as a distinct identity within a wider pre-mature social grouping. Chapter 2 reviews critical theories particularly relevant to the thesis: reader response and cultural materialism. A discussion of book history is made in Chapter 3.

Part II explores the texts themselves, justifying each choice by referencing the evidence of reading and/or recommendation contemporary with the novels. In Chapters 4 and 5 Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison* and Burney's *Evelina* are examined. The focus of Chapter 6 is the Gothic novel, identifying Radcliffe's *Romance of the Forest* as a key text among the Young Adult female audience. Wood's *East Lynne* and Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, both immensely popular early examples of the sensation genre, are considered in Chapter 7. Chapter 8 investigates the largely forgotten work of Flora Shaw, with a close examination of her novel *Colonel Cheswick's Campaign*. This chapter, together with the Conclusion, identifies the significant changes in female expectation apparent by 1890, changes which encouraged a new direction in fiction for girls.

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*'Simple, sweet and inexperienced...'*

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## Introduction

Stories that a culture brands popular, juvenile and gender-linked, like fictions for adolescents and children, are triply disadvantaged ...  
...the history of adolescence or young adulthood remains the proverbial ugly duckling. Historical studies of the teenage years are much rarer than considerations of childhood; the few recent examples are also, I might add, almost exclusively devoted to male adolescence ...[Y]oung adult literature...is surely as conspicuously orphaned as that cultural experience of adolescence which generates it... If children's literature has advanced beyond marginality as a field of scholarly inquiry, adolescent literature remains many leagues behind.

(Myers, 1989:22)

While undertaking my MA with the University of Surrey Roehampton, I researched a forgotten nineteenth-century children's author called Flora Shaw, whose total fiction output amounted to five novels. The content of the first two showed that they were written for children, but the later three increasingly addressed an older readership, adolescents and finally, in *Colonel Cheswick's Campaign*, Young Adult girls facing the uncertainties of relationships, marriage, home-making and motherhood. This seemed to fall within the parameters of what we would now term a 'YA' (Young Adult) novel, but every written authority I consulted dated YA novels as a post 1930s phenomenon. My evidence showed this to be unlikely, and so I set out in my PhD research to show that Young Adult girls were reading fiction specifically suited to their young adult concerns as early as the 1750s. My purpose has been to consider the themes and issues common to young adults across the centuries, and to identify fiction which addressed them. These issues relate to approaching maturity, and the societal expectations placed upon a Young Adult girl by the ideology of her time, which may be at odds with her own ambitions. Identity is a key issue, and the novels commonly feature the struggles of teenage girls, or those in their early twenties, to come to terms with their future role in society.



In the twenty years since the children's literature historian and scholar Mitzi Myers made the assessment quoted above at the head of my introduction, the status of the *modern* novel for young adults has risen. Nevertheless Robert Bator's statement, made in 1987 and quoted by Myers, that 'a literature designed for the teenaged market was a 1930s phenomenon. . . . nothing specifically penned for adolescents existed before' (24), remains a bafflingly common perception. Despite the constant republication of nineteenth-century fiction for girls, particularly from the trans-Atlantic genre which introduced us to Louisa Alcott's March girls and Susan Coolidge's Carr family, and the explosion of girls' school stories in Britain after 1890, many scholars of children's literature continue to regard the novel for young adults as a modern phenomenon. Victor Watson, as editor of the *Cambridge Guide to Children's Literature in English* (2001) includes an article by Kate Agnew and Maureen Nimon on 'Young Adult Fiction' which begins '[a]s a genre young adult fiction did not exist until well after World War II' (775). However, in his Introduction to *Coming of Age in Children's Literature* (2003), he acknowledges the existence of 'fictional children (mostly girls) passionately seeking in books to escape from the vicissitudes of maturation' and authors creating 'a family series in which it was possible to explore maturation in an extended sequence of novels' (11).

In writing *Paths of Virtue?*, I seek to challenge this view by investigating historical perceptions of female adolescence and young adulthood, suggesting appropriate critical viewpoints, discussing commonly accepted identifiers of fiction for young adults, and, in the light of these, examining key texts written in Britain between 1750 and 1890, and for which there is evidence that they were widely recommended for or read by Young Adult girls. Throughout, for clarity, I shall capitalize the initial letters of 'Young Adult' when referring to this categorization of girls living in the years between 1750 and 1890. This in no way indicates that the social, psychological and sexual concerns of the Young Adult girl between 1750 and 1890 were fundamentally in any way different from those of her modern counterpart. As will become clear in the course of my argument, the basic issues for which girls have sought guidance in their teenage years and early twenties remain unchanged.

In order to locate my study within the body of late twentieth and early twenty-first-century work on young adults and their literature, it is useful to mention some of the

relevant critical and historical texts published about the sociology of youth and about children's literature in the last thirty years. Like Myers we may deplore the androcentric concentration of earlier historical overviews. We must nevertheless acknowledge that writers such as Spacks, in *The Adolescent Idea: Myths of Youth and the Adult Imagination*, and Dyhouse's *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, both published in 1981, had already begun to focus on the difference in maturational experience for *girls*, compared with that of boys. The didactic use of text, both overtly instructional and as fiction, on both sides of the Atlantic, has formed the subject matter of several studies of the perceived emergence of a body of literature for adolescent girls. Of these, Rowbotham's writing on advice in Victorian literature, *Good Girls Make Good Wives* (1989), and Mitchell's examination of the change in girls' culture between 1880 and 1915, *The New Girl* (1995) concentrate on British texts after 1840.

In *Disciplines of Virtue* (1995) Vallone provided one of the few detailed surveys of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century girls' culture in Britain and America, interrogating children's and adult literature, conduct manuals and factual sociological material contemporary with her subject through feminist critical theory. O'Keefe writes on late nineteenth- and twentieth-century US girls' books in *Good Girl Messages* (2000) and Driscoll's *Girls* (2002) provides a wider sociological view of 'feminine adolescence in popular culture and cultural theory', and offers within it a brief survey of the history of adolescence. Driscoll argues the case for a changing historical perception of what she terms 'feminine' adolescence. In the course of my argument, however, I shall propose that there exists a greater uniformity in the historical recognition of the characteristics of a Young Adult girl than has been commonly recognized. Adapting a phrase coined by Juliana Horatia Ewing in 1876 and echoing the title of Henry James' 1899 novel, Bilston takes *The Awkward Age in Women's Popular Fiction* (2004) as the subject of her examination of the textual portrayal of girls and the transition to womanhood between 1850 and 1900. Bilston centres her argument on those texts which highlight a later Victorian emphasis on female adolescence as an overtly traumatic experience. Meek and Watson's 2003 discussion of the work of key twentieth-century children's authors' writing about coming of age is prefaced by a brief historical survey.

Two especially significant scholarly works in any historically-based consideration of the development of a body of fiction for Young Adult girls are the analyses of reading by women and girls by Kate Flint in *The Woman Reader: 1837-1914* (1993) and by Jacqueline Pearson in *Women's Reading in Britain 1750-1835* (1999). These are studies consistent with critical approaches which have informed my own research, especially reader-response and book-history theories. Both Flint and Pearson powerfully argue the crucial interrelationship between the reader, text, author and publisher/marketer. Each considers not merely women's reading but also *girls'* reading, and bases her argument on reading records, on critical response, and on marketing data contemporaneous with the periods covered by their studies, as well as on evidence within the novels being read.

My study is organized in two parts: a theoretical overview laying out the background to the focus of my argument, followed by a detailed examination of five texts which are constantly cited in the reading recorded by Young adult girls: *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753-54), *Evelina* (1778), *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), *East Lynne* (1861), and *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) and the text which prompted my current research, *Colonel Cheswick's Campaign* (1886). In the first chapter I consider the historical development of a consciousness of adolescence and young adulthood, identifying the issues common to all young people, and those specific to girls. Chapters 2 and 3 briefly outline the relevance of reader-response theory, cultural materialism and book-history theory to my approach. Part II is presented historically, to show how each genre – epistolary, Gothic, sensation and Victorian Imperialism – addressed the issues of its young readers within the ideological philosophy of its time. I also show how the young women at the centre of each text challenge, modify, and sometimes displace those ideological expectations, and how the new expectations held by each generation of young female readers influenced the writers and succeeding texts. Chapter 4 examines the records in diaries and other primary evidence which identifies the fiction which girls were reading. It then analyses the ways in which the selected text by Samuel Richardson display the identifiers of Young Adult fiction and their messages for girl readers. Chapter 5 extends this with a brief consideration of Fanny Burney's novel. In Chapter 6 a similar approach is made to Ann Radcliffe's novel, showing how the Gothic genre addressed anew the concerns of its Young Adult female audience. The rise of the sensation novel in the mid-nineteenth century is

considered in Chapter 7 in relation to the popularity among Young Adult girls of specific novels by Ellen Wood and Margaret Braddon, each atypical of the genre. Chapter 8 examines Flora Louisa Shaw's long-forgotten late-Victorian novel, critically acclaimed in its day but already too old-fashioned to attract a continuing readership.

The title of my work, 'Paths of Virtue?', is taken from a 250-page condensation of Richardson's novels *Pamela* (2 volumes, 1740), *Clarissa* (7 volumes, 1747-48) and *Sir Charles Grandison* (7 volumes, 1753-54), made in 1756. This small single volume, *The Paths of Virtue Delineated*, anonymously 'familiarised and adapted to the capacities of youth', is prefaced by half a dozen pages recommending its role in instilling religion and virtue, and 'teaching the young inexperienced heart to govern its passions; to regulate its desires and pursuits after happiness' (1974:iii).

I therefore centre my research not on the texts usually recognized as 'children's literature', but on six novels within the wider body of fiction, which nevertheless were clearly intended to delineate the paths of virtue for their Young Adult female readers, each novel encapsulating both the maturational concerns of this readership and the ideology of its time. None of the first five of these authors, Richardson, Burney, Radcliffe, Wood and Braddon, nor the particular novels chosen for examination is now specifically identified as written for young people, yet they are identified as favourite reading by some of those girls themselves in their diaries and letters. Five of the six novels were written by women, engaging in what Myers termed the tradition of 'matriachal' writing which emerged in the eighteenth century, designed to provide 'realistic adolescent socialization' for young women through fiction as well as through instructional manuals.<sup>1</sup> I shall show in my fourth chapter how Richardson, the single male author whose novels I discuss, acquired the interest and insight which equipped him to write fiction particularly appropriate to, and enjoyed by, a Young Adult female audience.

The inspiration for my investigation into the early history of a literature for Young Adult girls has been in the choices made by some of those girls themselves, as distinct from those novels recommended as suitable reading by the guardians of their educational and social well-being. As my work will show, several of the texts most

popular with Young Adult girls, though considered unsuitable reading by their adult mentors, address their young readers' concerns about female maturation (principally inter-generational relationships, romance and identity) as seriously as any book of instruction, and far more accessibly. These novels do indeed indicate the paths of virtue, demonstrably delineated for the enjoyment of their audience. The final text examined, Shaw's *Colonel Cheswick's Campaign* (1886), seems never to have achieved this popularity, although widely recommended in the press, and despite addressing typically Young Adult-female concerns as well as conveying late Victorian ideological messages to its readers. My choice of Shaw's novel has also been made to demonstrate that, although it fulfils the criteria I identify as signifiers of texts written for a Young Adult female readership, by 1886 the girls themselves were discovering a new independence and widening horizons for their life-choices. Although Shaw's heroine would like to become a doctor, after considerable psychological turmoil, her eventual choice is not a career but marriage. Unfortunately for Shaw, at the very moment when she focused on writing for Young Adult girls, shifting her emphasis away from her earlier books for children, school, career and adventure stories particularly suited to an increasingly independent female teenage audience, by writers such as L.T. Meade and Bessie Marchant, became widely and cheaply available in the libraries and bookshops. For late Victorian middle-class girls a university education and a career were becoming a real possibility. Increasingly, for them the 'paths of virtue' needed to be found in a wider world, and their choice of fiction-reading expanded to embrace and encourage a new genre of texts for Young Adult girls. These books reflected the aspirations and expectations of a new generation for whom an acceptable and successful future did not inevitably mean marriage and motherhood. Unlike the earlier history of literature for Young Adult girls, the proliferation of writers and titles which emerged after 1880 for that market have been the subject of considerable scholarly attention.

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<sup>1</sup> Myers (1987), quoted in Rowe, K.E. 'Virtue in the Guise of Vice', in Ruwe, D. (ed.) (2005) *Culturing the Child 1690-1914*.

## **Part 1:**

# **Young Adult Girls and their Reading:**

## **A Theoretical Framework**

## **Part 1**

### **Young Adult Girls and their Reading:**

#### **A theoretical framework**

## **Chapter 1**

### **Defining the Young Adult**

#### **1.1 An Apprenticeship to Adulthood?**

##### **...Or, What is a Young Adult?**

In order to discuss the early history of fiction for Young Adult girls, it is necessary first to consider what constitutes both a 'Young Adult', and a 'girl'. To achieve this, we must look at whether, and in what way, the concept of Young Adult differs from that of an adolescent, and investigate the way in which the concept of adolescence and what we now describe as 'Young Adult' have developed and changed over time.<sup>1</sup> The term 'Young Adult' was coined in the late twentieth century to describe a genre of literature that specifically deals with issues of concern to older teenagers. Indeed it is so new a term that, in 2009, it awaits definition in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. We may also look at the use of the term 'girl' from as early as the turn of the fourteenth century to mean 'maiden' or 'young unmarried woman'.<sup>2</sup> The age range covered by the use of the terms 'adolescent' and 'YA', 'girl' or 'young lady' is historically and culturally imprecise. In the following study, I consider the reading of Young Adult girls to be that of girls preparing themselves for adult life, which in different centuries and in different social classes, may or may not coincide with the earlier or later stages of puberty – what we now loosely term 'adolescence'.

In 1950 Erik H. Erikson, a Freudian psychologist, offered a telling definition of adolescence as 'a no-man's-land between childhood and maturity' (1964:331). The



recognition of a distinct developmental phase between child and adult has varied over the centuries and in different societies. The physical changes which take place, from the outward growth of the body to the maturation of sexual potency, are both obvious and undeniable, and have been recorded and celebrated in many civilizations by ceremonial rites of passage between childhood and adulthood. However, less apparent is an understanding throughout the centuries of the effect of this maturation on psychological and intellectual development, individually and collectively, and the acceptance that the maturational process gives rise to a specific phase in human ageing between child and adult. Equally important are the different societal expectations of boys' and girls' behaviour during adolescence and the approach to full maturity. In England, from medieval times onward, society has broadly acknowledged, and even encouraged, the propensity of post-pubescent males to behaviour involving wild and indiscriminate excess, while generally denying girls an equivalent physical outlet for their equally traumatic transition from child to adult. Young men were traditionally expected to seek these experiences ('sowing their wild oats') as a preparation for settling down into their future working life, whether as employer or employee. For post-pubescent girls however, such excesses of intellectual, physical and sexual activity were (and, it might be argued, still are, as the *Daily Mail* headline on November 17<sup>th</sup> 2006, 'Teenage girls binge-drinking more than boys', attests) considered medically, psychologically and socially dangerous,. They represent a perceived threat to the innocence and virginity which was the only acceptable condition for a marriageable female in a society which saw marriage and motherhood as the preferred option in a limited range of occupations available to women.

In English society, at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the transition from boy to adult man is recognized as problematical, and recorded by Shakespeare in *The Winter's Tale* (published 1623, but probably written 1610-11). The shepherd's heartfelt plea in Act 3, Scene 3 that 'I would there were no age between sixteen and three-and-twenty, or that youth could sleep out the rest' makes reference to the uncontrollable and irrational behaviour ('boiled brains') of young men, because there is 'nothing in the between but getting wenches with child, wronging the ancientry, stealing,

fighting' (1983:102). It is also clear that Shakespeare, writing in another late play *Antony and Cleopatra* (1606), perceives a difference between the actions of a young and a fully mature woman, when, in Act 1 Scene 5, Cleopatra compares her youthful dalliance with Julius Caesar with her mature relationship with Antony as '...My salad days, / When I was green in judgment, cold in blood...' (1987:42). By the late sixteenth century one of the uses of the word 'green' had developed to indicate 'immature' or 'youthful', with female pubescent anaemia being described as 'green sickness', and Shakespeare making reference to it in *Romeo and Juliet* (1597) Act 2 Scene 2, 'Her vestal livery is but sick and green/And none but fools do wear it; cast it off' (1984:47). Romeo's cure for Juliet's condition is one advocated both in society and in the literature of the succeeding centuries: marriage.

Throughout this time, and increasingly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there arose a literary genre of advice manuals such as James Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women* (1767), for adolescents in general, for girls in particular and also for their parents. These identified the possible dangers inherent in passing into adulthood which, for girls, might principally be avoided by the wise choice of a partner for marriage. The influence of the conduct book on the development of fiction for Young Adult girls will be examined in Chapter 4. By the mid-nineteenth century, there was a growing fear that an ever more industrialized society was resulting in an urban culture in which individuals were increasingly anonymous and unaccountable. It was felt that, as a result, societal and individual morality was threatened and, in line with the drive to ground knowledge within scientific parameters, nineteenth-century sexologists defined normal and aberrant sexual practices, and became a powerful exponent of morally acceptable behaviour. It was widely held that satisfying the adolescent pre-marital sexual appetite (particularly by masturbation) debilitated the health of the young, with consequent harm not only to the individual but to society in general. As young adult males had in earlier centuries been directed towards activities which, it was hoped, would divert their increasing emotional and sexual passions into less problematic pastimes, so girls were now overwhelmed with ideas to occupy themselves healthily. As will be seen in a later chapter, literacy expanded enormously following the 1870 and 1880 Education Acts, particularly among

women and girls of the working class, and a thriving market emerged for magazines and books filled with advice for girls.<sup>3</sup>

Although it is clear from this evidence that while an intermediate stage between childhood and full maturity had long been recognized as present, and that it was a potentially turbulent time, a more rigorous definition of adolescence did not emerge until the American psychologist G. Stanley Hall's ground-breaking 1904 study, *Adolescence: Its psychology and its relations to physiology, anthropology, sociology, sex, crime, religion and education*. Hall, an adherent of Darwinian evolutionary theory, saw adolescence as a distinct developmental phase, characterized by 'storm and stress'.<sup>4</sup> This stage in an individual's progress towards maturity was, he observed, fraught by conflict with parents, mood swings, and intemperate behaviour. Hall's two-volume work is based on physiological and psychological evidence, and examines in considerable detail the impact both of what he terms adolescents on early-twentieth-century American society, and of society's ways of dealing with adolescents, as well as briefly surveying geographical and cultural differences. Interestingly, in the second volume he devotes Chapter XVII to 'Adolescent Girls and their Education', recognizing the historical difference in attitude to educating girls, and affirming the need to consider the needs of adolescent girls as being separate from those of boys in this age group. As part of his exhaustive work, Hall considers the findings of several late-nineteenth-century surveys of adolescent reading. While these are not directly pertinent to my current thesis, they do support his assertion that at this developmental stage there is '[a] pubescent reading passion' (II:474), described by his unreferenced source 'Lancaster' as 'a craze for reading at some time in the adolescent period'. Hall states that, according to one study:

[g]irls read more fiction than boys at every age, but the interest in it begins to be decided at adolescence... [g]irls prefer domestic stories and those with characters like themselves and scenes more like those with which they are familiar... [w]omen writers seem to appeal more to girls  
(477)<sup>5</sup>

By Hall's time, of course, there was an established tradition of women writing fiction for child, adult, and intermediate audiences, but in Chapter 4 I will show that a male writer

such as Samuel Richardson, writing domestic stories involving characters with whom the reader can identify, and located in familiar settings, could attract and maintain a readership of pre- and post-pubescent females just as successfully. Hall, using the statistical evidence gathered by an unreferenced source, Dr. Reyer, says that ‘the greatest greed of reading is from the age of fifteen to twenty-two, and is on the average greatest of all at twenty’ (478).

Hall had begun to formulate his ideas about adolescence, and his view of it as a time of ‘storm and stress’, as early as 1882 when, in ‘The Moral and Religious Training of Children’, a paper in the *Princeton Review* for January of that year, he stated that this developmental stage was defined by ‘lack of emotional steadiness, violent impulses, unreasonable conduct, lack of enthusiasm and sympathy...The previous selfhood is broken up... and a new individual is in process of being born’. He identified these changes as consequent to physical puberty, and the rush of hormones associated with it. When his initial theory was expanded into the 1904 work, Hall incorporated the theories of Freud (whose work he greatly admired) and his own religious and moral convictions within a wide-ranging attempt to indicate both the causes of adolescent angst, and the way in which its malleability could be beneficially used. In this respect Hall, while defining adolescence more specifically and scientifically than previous writers, was no less concerned with directing this age group towards a respectable future than had been the authors of the conduct books which in previous centuries were intended to inform and conform the manners of the younger generations.

Hall’s observation and physiological and psychological explanation of adolescence as a stage which was identified by ‘inner absorption and reverie’ (I:311), ‘the dominance of sentiment over thought’ (I:318), ‘overassertion of individuality’ (I:315), and the youthful fear ‘inadequacy of its powers to cope with the world’ (II:78) are not revelations but a systematic categorization of characteristics already recognized over the preceding centuries. Again quoting Lancaster, Hall comments that the extremes of emotion associated with adolescence are particularly noticeable in ‘the curve of despondency’, which ‘starts at eleven, rises steadily and rapidly till fifteen, culminates at seventeen, then

falls steadily till twenty-three' (II:77). These are all potentially damaging character traits which were clearly recognized in the past, and remedies suggested, both physical and moral. They are central themes of the fiction I shall examine, and I shall argue that these are significant determinants in identifying fiction written for Young Adult girls between the years 1750 and 1890.

The works of Ariès in 1962, and of Cobb in 1998 promoted the view that adolescence was not recognized as a life-stage until the Industrial Revolution, when large numbers of workers who would previously have been absorbed within the agrieconomy of their own local area moved into an urban environment. Because a ruralist culture may offer children little formalized education, and marriage takes place early, it was argued that there is a perceived progress straight from child to adulthood, without a recognition of adolescence. However the work of Schlegel and Barry (1991), examining ethnographic data from over 170 pre-industrial societies, has refuted the theory that these did not recognize an adolescent stage in which a biologically engendered 'storm and stress' is exhibited. Margaret Mead's 1928 study of adolescent girls, *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Study of Adolescence and Sex in Primitive Societies*, referenced in Springhall (1986), had set out to challenge Hall, and prove that it was nurture, not nature, which determined how young people faced their post-pubescent years. Her findings were used to reinforce the theory that a supportive, settled culture such as that of pre-industrial society would not necessarily produce a developmental stage which displayed what Hall had seen as psychological signifiers of adolescence. The conclusions of both Hall and Mead have been questioned in more recent times, as in Chen and Farruggia (2002), and common sense encourages us to accept aspects of both the biological determinism of Hall and the cultural anthropologism of Mead, while recognizing that each of them foregrounds that evidence which supports their own thesis, while sidelining (at best) contradictory findings. What emerges is a recognition that adolescence may be a period of emotional conflict, but that the structure of individual societies may successfully ameliorate the experience.

Although Philippe Ariès, who examined the social history of family life in *Centuries of Childhood* (1962) claimed that ‘adolescence’ as a concept was not created until around 1900, it cannot be denied that five hundred years before that there existed activities and institutions whose purpose was to channel the over-exuberance of young men in a controllable direction. Both Springhall (1986) and Neubauer (1992) cite the study Natalie Zemon Davis made in 1975 of ‘Abbeys of Misrule’ in sixteenth-century France, and her assertion that adolescence was distinguished ‘as a period of sexual maturation’ (Neubauer, 1992:4). Springhall discusses the tradition of (male) apprenticeship in relation to the development of the adolescent as a distinct and recognizable stage, and his conclusion that ‘apprenticeship...was as much [about] the social control of youth as it was to provide an opportunity for personal fulfilment and the search for identity’ (18) seems curiously negative. If we are attempting to identify society’s consciousness of adolescence as a stage, and its outward manifestations, the system of apprenticeship would seem to me to indicate a clear recognition of adolescence as a distinct and potentially difficult age. Springhall further identifies what appears to be a particularly English habit – that of sending pubescent males and females ‘away from their own homes and into the households of others’ (21). This, he alleges, arose from a number of factors both economic and philosophical, but the habit helped the young ‘to prepare themselves for their adult identities by entering into what has been called ‘the web of social connections’’ (21). Perhaps more crucially, he admits that it was a ‘mechanism for separating the generations at a time where there might otherwise have been considerable friction’ (21): Hall’s ‘storm and stress’ perhaps?

We can see, therefore, that the existence of a developmental stage which equates to what became known as adolescence was named and acknowledged for many years before it was clearly defined – indeed we might argue that the definition continues to remain fluid. The empiricist philosopher John Locke, writing about the education of the sons of the gentry in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), discusses the young men between sixteen and twenty-one who were sent by their well-to-do families on the Grand Tour of Europe. Locke considered this a fruitless activity as in this period of their life they were both ‘raw and unruly’ and therefore least likely to benefit from their

experiences (quoted in Springhall, 22). The French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, an admirer of Locke's views, in his novel *Émile or On Education* (1762) which proposes a system of upbringing for a boy (and, in passing, a girl) from birth to adulthood, separates the developmental stages through which Émile will pass, allotting each a section. So, in Book III he deals with the years from twelve to fifteen, which he sees as pre-adolescent, and in Book IV he views puberty as those years between sixteen and becoming a young man (1974:128). Rousseau's thesis was that a child is born innately good, and that it is the influence of the natural world, not culture, which will allow it to grow into an individual, a complete and worthy human being. Rousseau considers that '[a]ll that we lack at birth, all that we need when we come to man's estate, is the gift of education. This education comes to us from nature, from men or from things.' (5-6).

As we shall see in later chapters, Rousseau's views about upbringing and individuality were enormously influential in the growth of the Romantic movement, and in the fiction which particularly attracted older adolescent/Young Adult readers in the late eighteenth century. However, most significant is his recognition of adolescence as a period in which while reason has become well developed, the influence of passion is at its greatest and most dangerous. Rousseau sees that, wrongly educated (i.e. by cultural force rather than natural example) 'youthful passions' lead to 'young people, hasty, impetuous, flighty, wandering from fete to fete, from amusement to amusement, never to settle to anything' (279). He considers that these emotions need careful education to develop the individual's natural inclinations towards morality and an understanding of religion. Wrongly brought up, adolescents find restriction 'hateful to them, they are sick of it, they see nothing in it but their masters' tyranny' (279). If this happens, he asserts, they rebel, for when they escape from childhood, they think they must shake off all control... the age of license' (280).

Rousseau recognizes adolescence as a crucial phase in human development, when the adult's whole future is shaped: '[w]e are born, so to speak, twice over; born into existence, and born into life; born a human being, and born a man' (172). He also emphasizes the importance at this time of 'self-love', which we could compare with the

concepts of identity and self image so vital to adolescent well being. The final stage identified in Rousseau's *Émile* is one in which pubescent/adolescent emotions are shaped into those of a young gentleman, 'the last act of youth's drama' (321). The ultimate goal for Rousseau is that Émile should find the ideal woman, a choice which he can only make once he has reached the stage of what might be now termed 'Young Adult': 'he will not recognise her till the time is come' (369). Here Rousseau is clear that there is a distinction between the adolescent and the Young Adult, and he extends this latter period into his hero's twenties. This recognition of a distinction between the two stages is echoed in the characterization by Goethe of his hero Werther in *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (1774, translated in 1779 as *The Sorrows of the Young Werther* [sic]). An early work of the Sturm und Drang movement, and published when he was twenty-five, Goethe's epistolary novel depicts Werther as an ordinary young man whose unrequited love for a young woman betrothed to another plunges him into such despair that he shoots himself. Werther's emotions are typical of a pre-adult, from elation derived from his passionate adoration to a deep despair, which are accompanied by a morbid introspection, heightened by the extreme sensibility of the Romantic movement.

In the light of the evidence we have seen so far in this chapter, therefore, the claim that adolescence is a late nineteenth-century construct because, in Neubauer's words, 'the appearance of interlocking discourses about adolescence emerged in psychoanalysis, psychology, criminal justice, pedagogy, sociology as well as in literature' (6) is perhaps too sweeping an assertion. Patricia Meyer Spacks has quite rightly stated that '[a]dolescents have always existed, but the myth of adolescence has thrived most richly since G. Stanley Hall invented it' (1981:228). The theoretical quantification of something does not bring it into existence – gravity existed before Newton's discovery, and we have seen that the recognition of adolescence as a distinct and troublesome phase between child and adult actually dates back many centuries. It does appear, however, that Hall's psycho-sociological quantification of adolescence provided impetus for the creation of what Spack terms 'the myth'.



## **1.2 From Adolescence to Adulthood:**

### **Historical Definitions**

The age boundaries attributed to the period between puberty and maturity have varied throughout this period, and continue to provide debate in the twenty-first century. Just as there has never been total agreement concerning the age boundaries of adolescence, so there exists no clear and irrefutable distinction between adolescent and Young Adult. Biological, geographical, historical and ideological factors all impact upon the ages of puberty and maturity, and adolescence today is still defined variously by different organisations and cultures. Locke's young men on the Grand Tour were between sixteen and twenty-three, and might be seen as Young Adults rather than early adolescents. Rousseau's 'last act of youth's drama' has a similar upper age, while Hall saw adolescence as lasting from fourteen to twenty-four. Fifty years after Hall, Erikson defined his 'Eight Ages of Man'. This includes an extended and highly insightful survey of adolescence (between twelve and eighteen), which he defines not just as a 'no-man's land' but as 'a psychosocial stage' (1965: 254), between childhood and adulthood. However he also identifies a further distinctive developmental stage, that of Young Adult, which he considers a person between the ages of nineteen and thirty-four. Erikson's definition of a Young Adult 'emerging from the [adolescent] search for and insistence on identity...eager and willing to fuse his identity with that of others' (255). Erikson qualifies this as 'ready for intimacy...the capacity to commit himself to concrete affiliations and partnerships...even though they may call for significant sacrifices and compromises' (255). This, as will be seen in my subsequent chapters, is exactly the subject matter of the novels which I identify as having been written for Young Adult girls.

The American psychologist Jeff Arnett (2004) agrees with Erikson that the period between adolescence and adulthood is an extended one, and calls the earlier part of this stage 'emerging adulthood'. However, he argues (contrary to Erikson) that, as in adolescence, it is characterized by the need to establish an identity, and for emerging adults this is a search for adult identity. Arnett's definition comprises various stages: the age of identity explorations, the age of instability, the self-focused age, the age of feeling

in-between, and the age of possibilities. It is essential that we understand that, when Arnett separates the years from 'late teens through the mid to late twenties' (4) which he terms 'emerging adulthood', from the adolescence which precedes it, and from 'young adulthood', which follows, he emphasizes that these stages exist only within the socio-economic and historical context of specific cultures – in this instance the twenty-first-century United States of America. They are the result, he argues, of the increasing age at which young people leave home, and the late twentieth-/early twenty-first trend towards ever later marriage and child-rearing. In the brief historical overview of the concept of adolescence earlier in my chapter it became abundantly clear that adolescence cannot be categorically fixed between certain years of human development, and Arnett's work reinforces this. Puberty may cause the emotional turmoil of adolescence, but the culture within which the individual lives will determine how long Erikson's 'no man's land' or Arnett's 'in-between' stage lasts, and how it is viewed.

### **1.3 Young Adult *Girls***

The variability of the 'no-man's land' or 'in-between' stage is particularly obvious when we consider Young Adult *girls* between 1750 and 1890. The examples covering this period (and earlier) quoted in this chapter so far, have had little to say about post-pubescent female experience. Rousseau in fact does consider the upbringing of girls, acknowledges that 'but for her sex, a woman is a man' (321) but sees Émile's intended wife Sophy as a 'helpmeet' alone, and the role of women to be 'weak and passive...[she] should offer little resistance...made to please and to be in subjection to man' (322). During childhood, freedom should be denied to them, he maintains, to 'produce a docility which woman requires all her life long...she will never be free to set her own opinions above his' (333). Marriage and child-rearing are a woman's ultimate goal, Rousseau asserts, and while he views marriage without agreement and affection as unnatural, he sees no better life for a woman than conjugal domesticity. We shall see in successive chapters that this is indeed the principal intention and preoccupation in fiction for young adult girls between 1750 and 1890.

Accordingly, there was no apprentices' society, no Abbey of Misrule and no Grand Tour for adolescent girls. Facing a future of marriage and motherhood or entry into a religious order, girls were not routinely educated in anything other than domestic skills, and had no part in the practical acquisition of knowledge or experience away from home, unless they went into the service of a household other than their own. The only experience equivalent to the freedom allowed a young man during these centuries would have been that of the prostitute who would have helped him sow those wild oats so desirable for *him*, but totally denied to a respectable adolescent girl. In her 2007 V&A web-based essay *Sex and Sexuality*, the cultural historian Jan Marsh supports this argument: '[Prostitution] betokened visible female freedom from social control. As daughters, employees or servants, young women were subject to male authority; as whores they enjoyed economic and personal independence'. They alone were not defined and confined by society as were 'respectable' girls. In fact, the higher their social class, the greater the financial and social security but the less freedom girls had generally, trammelled by the restrictions which society placed upon them. We may roughly equate middle-class girls with the apprentice group of boys, who had a reasonable chance of some form of adult security. For boys this was an apprenticeship to a craft or profession, while for girls the possibility of a good marriage or a respectable 'genteel' occupation as a companion or governess. Depending upon how great their need was to earn a living, middle-class female adolescence could be subsumed within an early move into societal and biological (but not necessarily emotionally concurrent) adulthood.

This was undoubtedly true for the working classes, where male and female adolescents would probably be employed from a pre-teen age, because they needed to generate an income as soon as possible. Once independent of family support, they would therefore move into some form of societal adulthood, and for girls in this class, puberty would then probably mark a move into marriage and/or motherhood. None of these would necessarily mark the emotional maturity concomitant with adulthood. Until the 1880s brought compulsory primary education, with universally available literacy and greater opportunities, working-class girls would have had limited opportunities to address adolescent angst except within the stresses of an enforced adulthood.

Nevertheless, as we shall see in the novels to be examined, adolescence was no less turbulent for a girl than a boy, and conduct books and advice manuals not only prepared these potential ‘helpmeets’ for marriage, but also sought to address just those emotional maelstroms recognized as typical of male adolescence. However, society could not permit girls from the upper and middle classes the practical life-skills-learning experience available to boys, as virginity and sexual innocence were seen as paramount to marriageability. As a result, women higher up the social scale remained (figuratively) in a state of suspended animation, which continued the uncertainties of adolescence through an extended young adulthood which existed until they either married, or entered into a state of (often religious) spinsterhood, a view argued by Dyhouse (1981:118). It could therefore be argued that, in the years with which this study is concerned, young adulthood for non-working-class girls was equivalent to Arnett’s protracted ‘emerging adulthood’ in which attitudes and aspirations remain moveable until a partner is found and a joint home established. Adolescence and Young Adulthood therefore differed considerably according to social status and education. For a girl from a poorer background forced into work (or even motherhood) before she entered her teenage years, there was limited opportunity to work through her adolescent anxieties before she was thrust headlong into a premature adulthood. Conversely there might be unending opportunity for the upper-class girl ‘on the shelf’. As Nelson and Vallone (1994) highlight in their Introduction, ‘Young Adult *girls*’ throughout my period were therefore a diverse group, from greatly varied backgrounds, and for some of them that opportunity might only occur as a vicarious activity through their reading or listening experience. As I will demonstrate in Chapter 8, the increased availability of universal education, and the 1870 and 1880 Education Acts especially, had an enormous impact on the social demographic of the reading public. However, it had an equally dramatic effect on the lives of girls (in particular), the imposition both of a gradually rising school-leaving age and age of consent granting to more of them a breathing space between childhood and adulthood – the ability to be Young Adults.

Women writing both advice and fiction for Young Adult girls were acutely aware of the emotional maelstrom within which their readers were buffeted during the years from

adolescence to adulthood. In July 1864 the author Dinah Mulock (later Craik) wrote in an article called 'In Her Teens' in volume 10 of *Macmillan's Magazine* that 'the years between twelve and twenty are, to most, a season anything but pleasant; a crisis in which the whole heart and brain are full of tumult, when all life looks strange and bewildering -- delicious with exquisite unrealities, -- and agonized with griefs equally chimerical and unnatural' (220).

In the introduction to *The Awkward Age* (2004), Sarah Bilston considers in detail the psychosociology of adolescent and Young Adult girls from 1850 to 1900. She cites Juliana Horatia Ewing's novel of girls growing up in India, *Six to Sixteen* (1875) as the first use of the phrase 'the awkward age' to describe the female post-pubescent/pre-adult experience. It was Henry James who, in 1899, went on to use Ewing's phrase as the title of his novel about an eighteen-year-old girl and her suitors. Bilston shows that novelists such as Charlotte Yonge, Christabel Coleridge, and purveyors of advice for Young Adult girls such as Lucy Soulsby reiterated the complexities of this 'uncomfortable stage'. In 1893 Soulsby dedicated her *Stray Thoughts for Girls* to 'girls at the "awkward age"', which she considers is 'most frequently found between the ages of thirteen and twenty-seven' (1898:v). She further acknowledges that 'some girls never go through it, and some never emerge from it!' (1898:v).

It is clear, therefore that, although Hall's work of 1904 may have been the first to attempt a scientific categorization and explanation for adolescence, there is ample written evidence from earlier centuries of the recognition of it as a distinct developmental stage. Moreover throughout there is also indisputable evidence of a distinction made between adolescents and young adults, and of the specific position of Young Adult *girls* within society and their particular need for role models both among their acquaintances and within their reading. In *Mansfield Park* (1814) Jane Austen portrays Fanny Price's aunt Mrs Norris utterly appalled at the thought of a teenage girl in her household. She protests:

Fanny live with me! the last thing in the world for me to think of, or for anybody to wish that really knows us both. Good heaven! what could I do with Fanny? Me! a poor,

helpless, forlorn widow, unfit for anything, my spirits quite  
broke down; what could I do with a girl at her time of life?  
A girl of fifteen! the very age of all others to need most  
attention and care, and put the cheerfullest spirits to the test!  
(2006:28-29)

In this Austen shows that, almost a century before Hall's observations of the 'storm and stress' of adolescence, the perception of what we would now term a 'Young Adult girl' was that she was not only at 'the very age of all others to need most attention and care', but also exasperating. Certainly we might interpret Mrs Norris's assertion that that Fanny would 'put the cheerfullest [*sic*] spirits to the test' as testimony to an eighteenth-century recognition of the moodiness still associated with that stage of development. In succeeding chapters I shall show that those writing for Young Adult girls, from Richardson onwards, were aware of the particular tensions experienced by this section of their readers, and that they tailored their fiction to supplement that attention and care.

<sup>1</sup> OED **adolescent** [as n. a. Fr. adolescent (15th c.) ad. L. adolēscēnt-em growing up, a youth, prop. pr. ppl. of adolēsc-ēre to grow up: see ADULT. The subst. use is the commoner in L., and much earlier in Fr. and Eng. than the adj.; the latter is probably taken direct from L.

*n.* A person in the age of adolescence; a youth between childhood and manhood.

**B.** *adj.* Growing towards maturity; advancing from childhood to maturity.

[The Oxford English Dictionary. 2nd ed. 1989. OED Online. Oxford University Press. 4 Apr.

2000 [http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50002960?single=1&query\\_type=word&queryword=adolescent&first=1&max\\_to\\_show=10](http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50002960?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=adolescent&first=1&max_to_show=10), accessed 10/11/2009]

OED **adolescence** The process or condition of growing up; the growing age of human beings; the period which extends from childhood to manhood or womanhood; youth; ordinarily considered as extending from 14 to 25 in males, and from 12 to 21 in females.

[The Oxford English Dictionary. 2nd ed. 1989. OED Online. Oxford University Press. 4 Apr.

2000 [http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50002958?single=1&query\\_type=word&queryword=adolescence&first=1&max\\_to\\_show=10](http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50002958?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=adolescence&first=1&max_to_show=10), accessed 19/11/2009]

<sup>2</sup> OED **girl** **1.** A child or young person of either sex, a youth or maiden. Chiefly in *pl.*: Children, young people.

**2.** *a.* A female child; commonly applied to all young unmarried women.

[The Oxford English Dictionary. 2nd ed. 1989. OED Online. Oxford University Press. 4 Apr.

2000 [http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50094864?query\\_type=word&queryword=girl&first=1&max\\_to\\_show=10&sort\\_type=alpha&result\\_place=1&search\\_id=kJ4g-p8CY](http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50094864?query_type=word&queryword=girl&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=1&search_id=kJ4g-p8CY), accessed 19/11/2009]

<sup>3</sup> Ranging from the purely practical, as in Phyllis Browne's 1885 book to prevent girls leading 'idle and useless lives', *What Girls Can Do: A Book for Mothers and Daughters*, to those devoted to specific leisure activities, exemplified in Lucy Soulby's 1898 *Stray Thoughts on Reading*.

<sup>4</sup> A phrase adapted from the eighteenth-century German literary and musical movement *Sturm und Drang*, which emphasized individual subjectivity

<sup>5</sup> Miss Vostrovsky (1899) 'A Study of Children's Reading Tastes', quoted in Hall (1904).

## **Part 1**

### **Young Adult Girls and their Reading:**

#### **A theoretical framework**

## **Chapter 2**

### **Critical Theory**

#### **2.1 Reception/Reader-Response:**

##### **Its Importance in the Historical Study of Young Adult Fiction**

In this section I shall consider the importance of the various ways in which readers respond to texts, and how far authors are aware of the audience of their period. However noble or specific the author's intentions, it is the response of readers which ultimately signifies the achievement of any text. In later chapters I shall examine the way in which individual authors writing novels throughout the period 1750 to 1890 sought to convey a message particularly suited to Young Adult girls, by offering a subtle blend of conduct literature and escapism. More crucially, I shall show how these novels were received by that group of readers, why those novels were so popular, and exactly what made them so important and appropriate to that age group.

The key point of reader-response theory is that the interpretation of any text must depend upon its reader and the contribution which the reader makes to that text as a result of his/her own culture and past experience. The degree to which each individual reader recreates the text in the light of that experience, and whether common experience leads to common interpretation, is a subject of continuing debate among reader-response theorists. As I have discussed in my first chapter, Young Adult girls are still in the process of assimilating their experiences and devising an approach to maturity and adult life. Their response to their reading, as to the events of life itself, remains fluid and variable, as do



their emotions during adolescence. It follows, therefore, that while, as Young Adults, there will be some commonality of experience, there will also be an important variation in emotional response to reading, dependent upon the psychological state of the individual, both from day to day, and from individual to individual, in different historical periods and from different social classes. The heightened emotional states typical of adolescence, capable of rapid and substantial swings from the ecstatic to the depressive, can result in great variation in response to a text. We need only to consider in our own experience how differently an apparently 'simple' text such as a letter from someone whose approval we seek can be interrogated for its real meaning, from minute to minute, according to our own feelings. Reader-response theory is therefore particularly appropriate when examining the literature read by Young Adult girls.

Before considering reader-response theory itself, it is useful to confirm its relevance by reference to J.A. Appleyard's developmental model of the reading process, expounded in *Becoming a Reader* (1991). Appleyard's study is particularly useful as it examines not only childhood and adolescent readers, but also a final stage which he terms the 'eclectic reader', which goes beyond adolescence, which many critics have failed to do. Although Appleyard's research is based on twentieth-century American data, the principles which his data supports are universal in application, and powerfully reveal the relationship which adolescents (and by extension Young Adults) have with their reading. Appleyard supplies three responses made by adolescents when asked about their reading:

1. They explicitly mention the process of *involvement* with the book and *identification* with the character
2. They talk about the *realism* of the story
3. And they say that a good story *makes them think*

(1994:100)

Appleyard continues to explain these responses by asserting that they 'appear to be interrelated as a sequence of deepening penetrations into the relationship between previously unquestioned experiences and the newly discovered need to understand and question them' (100). He identifies involvement and identification as the distinguishing factors in this age group's reading, reporting readers' comments that they are

‘transformed or transported’ by reading, being ‘lost in a book’, and experiencing ‘intense emotional reactions to the story’ . He finds that ‘[o]ften a reader will mention a strong personal motive for identifying with a character’ and, in accordance with his use of Holland’s psychoanalytic approach to reading, there may be complex triggers within an individual which influence the aspects of a character with which the reader seeks to identify. Appleyard considers that adolescents make life choices through their reading, and although they may assume the ‘right’ answer to be in the text itself, it is their reading and *thinking* about the issues posed which directs their choice. This process escalates as readers mature from adolescence to what he terms ‘college and beyond’ (in other words, a Young Adult and beyond), when they become, in Appleyard’s categorization, *interpreters* of the text. He is adamant that, for the adolescent and post-adolescent age group, reading is centred on their emotional response to the text rather than mere appreciation of its literary techniques. In his view, this is an essential response. He feels that ‘adolescents are, at the very least, passionately principled about the world and its meanings’ and that their ‘experiential involvement’ with their reading is the key to extracting ‘usable wisdom’ from it (118). He considers that this derives from

the reader’s sense of connection between his or her personal and emotional involvement with the work and the stance the work takes towards the whole world of ideas and their history, the debates about what men and women should and should not believe or value or do, the attitudes and feelings it is permissible or desirable to take towards the experiences of life, and all the ways poets and storytellers have interpreted their experiences.

(117)

Appleyard feels that the response of the readers to the text is often undervalued and overlooked, but is essential in their becoming readers in its fundamental sense – sentient readers of life.

The value of contemporary documentation when assessing reader response has been recognized by the reading-culture historians David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery. In their introduction to a selection of essays on ‘Texts and Readers’ in *The Book History Reader* (revised edition 2006) they emphasize the importance of the primary sources, the

‘presentations of the reading self’ which can provide ‘cautious insights into the individual’s reading habits and practices’ (389), which inform our understanding of reader response. Finkelstein and McCleery confirm the work done by earlier commentators on reading history such as Richard Altick and Amy Cruse. In 1957 Altick’s study of *The English Common Reader...1800-1900* subtitled ‘A Social History of the Mass Reading Public’ examined an area initially treated in the 1930s in Amy Cruse’s series of books on the history of public reactions to literature, and touched upon in Virginia Woolf’s two sets of essays collected in 1925 and 1932 as *The Common Reader*. Altick’s work synthesizes his research where Cruse’s extrapolates rather anecdotally from her sources, but each is primarily interested in the response of readers to the texts available to them at a given time, and its effect on what was subsequently written and read.

Although Louise Rosenblatt first posited reader-response theory in the 1930s, the major development of reader-response theory postdates Altick’s work, with the initial work by German critics such as Jauss and Ingarden. Their ‘reception’ theory in the 1960s was taken up in the influential phenomenological work of Fish since 1970, by Iser since 1974, and given a psychoanalytical basis by Holland in the 1980s. The significance of their work will be examined briefly next.

## 2.2 The Theorists

In placing the reader at the centre of the text, Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser and Norman Holland also refine and redirect the theories of Roland Barthes in which he denies the supreme importance of the author in the text – the ‘death of the author’. Barthes suggested instead that it was the *reader* who had the crucial relationship with the text. Wolfgang Iser’s work examines the balance of control between text and reader, and leads him to identify an ‘implied reader’ in the text. Iser separates the artistic aspect of any text, which he describes as ‘the text created by the author’ (1974:274), from the aesthetic, ‘the realization accomplished by the reader’ (274). For Iser ‘[t]he work is more than the text, for the text only takes on life when it is realized’. Even more important to my consideration of Young Adult girls’ response to their reading is Iser’s assertion that ‘the

realization is by no means independent of the individual disposition of the reader' (274). He uses a quotation from Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1768) to support his theory that in the past some authors have been aware of the dynamic interaction of reader with text. Sterne states that '...no author...would presume to think all: The truest respect which you can pay the reader's understanding, is to halve this matter amicably, and leave him something to imagine, in his turn, as well as yourself' (Iser, 275). Sterne continues by confirming that he 'do[es] all that lies in my power to keep his imagination as busy as my own' (275). Sterne, therefore, makes use of the reader's interaction with the text as an integral and crucial part of the text itself.

Iser insists that the outcome of the act of reading is the 'coming together of text and imagination' (279), and that 'it is the unwritten part that gives us the opportunity to picture things...without the gaps in the text, we should not be able to use our imagination' (283). Because of their individual realization of the text, readers are therefore an essential element in the creation of the text, he feels, and to achieve its ultimate entirety 'the "gestalt" must inevitably be coloured by our own characteristic selection process... it arises from the meeting between the written text and the individual mind of the reader with its own particular history of experience, its own consciousness, its own outlook' (284). For Young Adult girls, this process is of immense importance, allowing their novel reading to become specific to their own experience – fulfilling the need to identify and become involved with the text, particularly as these experiences will be different over different periods.

Fish takes this argument in a new direction, and is concerned with what the text *does* rather than what it *means*: it is the response of the reader to the text which is important, not the implicit meaning of that text itself. Although Fish constantly revises his theories he always foregrounds the activity of reading, and the pre-eminence of readers, in the process of identifying the meaning of any text. He says 'the reader's activities are at the center of attention, where they are regarded not as leading to meaning but as *having* meaning' (1980:158). It is, he believes, not the author's intention which influences how we interpret the text, but the values, culture and experience of the reader. Moreover, a

commonality of those values, culture and experience amongst a group (such, I would argue, as Young Adult girls of a specific period) will form an 'interpretive community'. Among the members of this group, he maintains, interpretation and response to a text will be similar, if not identical. We may, therefore, identify, as I shall in later chapters, specific texts which, because of their subject matter and style, will have relevance to one particular interpretive community in different periods: Young Adult girls. Fish's assertion that these communities 'are no more stable than texts, because interpretative communities are not natural or universal, but learned' (1976, in Finkelstein & McCleery 2002:457) also supports my contention that Young Adult girls, for the time that they remain such, form a distinctive group whose needs are met within a specific type of literature. This encourages them, through their interaction with the text, to make their own judgements, relevant not only to the generic problems which confront those facing female adulthood, but to the individual situation of each Young Adult girl reader.

Holland's interpretation of reader-response theory supports the individuality of each reader's realization of the text. For him, every reader will interpret text differently, not merely because of his/her own values, culture, and experience, but because of his/her individual and unique psychological make up. He too asserts that the meaning is not in the text but in the mind of the reader, and that no single interpretation is 'correct', but that there are infinite readings of any text. Nevertheless, he is adamant that, through our individual interaction with texts, 'fantasies' from childhood onwards, 'literature...does for us in an intense, encapsulated form what we must do for ourselves as we mature in life – it transforms primitive, childish fantasies into adult, civilized meanings' (1989:32). I shall argue that this is exactly what Young Adult girls seek, knowingly or not, through their reading, and that this is what the texts I shall discuss offer to this group of readers in different periods.

## **2.3 Cultural Materialism:**

### **How Fiction for Young Adult Girls Interacts with Ideology**

All texts are representative of the culture and time in which they were written. It is argued by some theorists therefore that in order to interpret literature meaningfully, it should be placed in its socio-historical context. To achieve this, it is necessary to investigate the issues, concerns and conflicts of its time which it reflects or makes comment upon – directly or indirectly. Authors cannot be wholly detached from the ideological baggage of their time, and it may be further argued that we should not be judgemental about their views when they reflect attitudes and opinions at variance with, or distasteful to those of our own time, culture and ideology. One critical approach influenced by Marxist literary theory, cultural materialism, is of particular relevance when analyzing texts written for and accessed by sections of society thought by the establishment of their time to be what we now classify as ‘Other’, and therefore marginalized. Within the period covered by my research those falling within this definition were considered to lack judgement or experience and to require specific direction, instruction and guidance, and include women, children, and, therefore, Young Adult girls.

Cultural materialism studies texts within a politicized framework. Although fiction for Young Adult girls is not overtly political, I shall examine how it is the socio-political ethos of the time which creates the ideology within which the texts are written and read. In considering the development of novels written for Young Adult girls, the future generation of mothers, this is of particular relevance. I shall show in later chapters that fictional writing for girls approaching womanhood – Young Adult girls – was heavily influenced by societal and cultural expectations of those girls, and originally derived from the perceived need to instruct them about their current behaviour and future role. It is the ways in which those writing for this age group deliver their expectations, and the extent to which subversion of the cultural or societal norm is countenanced, that are of greatest interest, and to which a cultural materialist approach is particularly relevant.

In his influential essay 'Shakespeare, Cultural Materialism and the New Historicism' Jonathan Dollimore, one of the principal recent proponents of cultural materialism, emphasizes that '[m]aterialist criticism refuses to privilege "literature" in the way that literary criticism has done hitherto' (1985: 4). Culture as a whole, he considers, is an amalgam of influences from a variety of sources drawn from a multiplicity of social positions. He derives from Williams the idea that the arts 'may have quite specific features as practices, but they cannot be separated from the general social process'.<sup>1</sup> Dollimore stresses that individuals and groups subordinate to the dominant culture (individuals and groups which he calls 'the alien' but which might be termed 'Other') interact with the dominant forms, and may be 'challenging, modifying and even displacing them' (6). His view is that as soon as a rule is created by those in authority, individuals or groups within the Other will be determined to break it, or at the very least, use it for their own benefit. As I shall show in later chapters, despite the widely held view that adolescent rebellion and angst are recent phenomena, this behaviour has been long documented, and throughout some Young Adult girls have sought to subvert society's expectations of them, and this has been recognized in the literature written for them.

Moreover, because of its focus on the influence of the Other on society and ideology, Dollimore and Sinfield argue that a definition of culture should encompass both 'high' and popular cultural forms, and that it cannot 'transcend the material forces and relations of production' (1985: Foreword). It is therefore essential to consider the influence of the development of book publishing on the availability and readership of novels for Young Adult girls, and this I shall undertake in my next chapter. As knowledge, acknowledgement and understanding of the particular socio-psychological factors which affected Young Adult girls expanded, so the writing itself reflected these changes. It is therefore important to our understanding of this fiction that we also interrogate non-literary texts which comment upon or influence essential aspects of the lives of Young Adult girls. It is for this reason that Stanley Hall's work on *Adolescence* was examined in my first chapter, that conduct books will be addressed when I consider the work of

Samuel Richardson and his contemporaries in a later chapter, and the influence of reviews, recommendations and criticism examined.

In researching the history of fiction written for Young Adult girls, it is necessary to detach the texts from the assumptions of previous literary scholarship and re-assess them as works particularly relevant to this readership. Cultural materialism recognizes the patriarchal structures and ideology which have sought to categorize young women, to marginalize their experience, and to dictate their social position. It examines closely the context within which works were written, and seeks to identify those elements in a text which may explain why its readers have become marginalized. It therefore has considerable relevance in a consideration of the history of fiction written for Young Adult girls.

Raymond Williams, in his Introduction to *Culture and Society 1780-1950*, notes that ‘in the last decades of the eighteenth century, and in the first half of the nineteenth century, a number of words, which are now of capital importance, came for the first time into common English use, or... acquired new and important meanings’ (1984:13). The words Williams identifies (the italics are his), ‘*industry, democracy, class, art and culture*’ (13), are of particular interest in any examination of the inevitable tensions between the dominant ideology of the ruling classes in society and the changing, emergent body of workers needed to service the rise of an industrialized economy. As we saw in my first chapter, it has been recognized for many centuries that the younger generation – Young Adults – are often inclined to question and rebel against authority. My examination of specific novels from 1750 to 1890 will show that, although the documentary history which I quoted mainly concerned Young Adult *males*, Young Adult *females* also questioned the ideological expectations of their time, though disenfranchised from any public expression of their concerns. Consequently, as we shall see in later chapters, instruction for this section of society was seen as an essential means of guiding young people back to the accepted ideology of their elders. In the centuries before the 1870 Education Act promised access to education for all, and the 1880 Act enforced it for those under the age of ten, communication of ideas to the majority of the population was



oral, since education, and therefore reading, was restricted to those with the time and money to learn. For most women in all sections of society, whose accepted role was seen to be domestic, education was not deemed necessary (indeed by many it was viewed as positively dangerous), and the ability to read was an even later acquisition than for men of the working classes. As Pearson (1999) notes, because of the restricted access to education, the promulgation of ideology to Young Adult girls via literature was therefore capable of reaching a much smaller number in that section of society in 1750 than by 1890.

Williams' observations on the changing meanings of the five words noted above are enormously significant in this respect, for he examines the changes in economy, production, society, and expectation which resulted from the growing industrialization in Great Britain between these years, and within which any study of literature (and culture in general) should be made. These changes, as we shall see in my next chapters, gradually created a vastly increased pool of readers (through increasing access to education), served by a far greater range and availability of books (through advances in production) within an increasingly complex social stratification by 'class'. Williams records the first use of class in its modern social sense at the end of the eighteenth century, where the term 'lower classes' is used interchangeably with 'lower orders', which had appeared earlier in the century. Italicising the terms, Williams continues,

Then, in the 1790s, we get *higher classes*; *middle classes* and *middling classes* follow at once; *working classes* in about 1815; *upper classes* in the 1820s. *Class prejudice*, *class legislation*, *class consciousness*, *class conflict*, and *class war* follow in the course of the nineteenth century. The *upper middle classes* are first heard of in the 1890s; the *lower middle class* in our own century [20<sup>th</sup>].

(14-15)

Williams emphasizes that 'this spectacular history of the new use of class does not indicate the *beginning* of social division in England' (14), but asserts that 'the structure then built on it 'reflects the changes to social structure and changed social feeling 'at a crucial phase in the development of political democracy' (14) resulting from the processes of the Industrial Revolution. The influence on literature of the social structure

represented in this increasingly class-based stratification will become evident in later chapters of my thesis, and my examination of book history will show how closely changes in socio-political influence changes in the availability, access to, and content of literature.

In *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading* (1992), Alan Sinfield argues that, using cultural materialism, with its insistence that any text should be seen within the socio-political world of the time when it is written and read, to interrogate texts, we are able to see more clearly the complexity of relationship between a text, its writer, and its readers. He considers that, as well as texts which seek to shape their readers by expounding what he calls ‘the dominant’ (ideology), and those texts which seek to subvert that ideology, no control can be exercised over the readers’ interpretation of texts. The consequence of this is, he argues, that some readers may be termed ‘dissident readers’, whose interpretation of the text may differ radically from the dominant, as a result of their own background. His use of ‘dissidence’ implies ‘simply...refusal of an aspect of the dominant, without prejudicing an outcome’ (49).

Crucially, Sinfield dismisses the concept of a text having a single, correct interpretation. In his view, because of the diversity of background of its readers ‘[t]he text is always a site of cultural contest, but it is never a self-sufficient site’ (49). He also refutes the traditional literary critical purpose ‘*to help the text into coherence*’ [Sinfield’s italics], that ‘discovery of coherence’ taken as ‘the demonstration of quality’ (50). This is because, he asserts, ‘the range of feasible readings depends not only on the text but on the conceptual framework within which we address it’ (51). This of course is true not only for the way in which the twenty-first century reader interprets a text from the eighteenth or nineteenth century, but for all those intervening readers over those centuries whose reading of the text is informed by the dominant ideology of the time in which they are reading. For my study of novels for Young Adult girls who, in the period under examination (1750-1890), in addition to the insecurities of maturation which they faced, were marginalized within society – the Other – the concept of ‘dissident’ reading is of considerable importance.

In his 2007 George Orwell Lecture, Michael Rosen, then recently designated Children's Laureate, and an adherent of Marxist criticism, described how, as a student of literature in the 1960s, he was directed to George Orwell's essay on Swift, which considered the role of contemporary culture in relation to an author's work.<sup>2</sup> While Rosen acknowledges that Orwell's essay revolutionized the way in which Rosen himself thereafter examined his set texts, he is critical of Orwell's particular interpretation of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, as he considers that Orwell himself is reading it in the light of his own social and cultural experience. Rosen argues that '[t]he distinctiveness in a reader's reading is that it can be felt or articulated by a single person. Its generality lies in how it is constituted and constructed out of prevailing attitudes and conditions.' Rosen considers that while 'the Gulliver essay is Orwell's', it is not a balanced piece of writing because 'Orwell's views are created out of such matters as his struggles with Soviet Communism, British chauvinism, the class system and so on.' Rosen considers that '[w]hat he [Orwell] lacks is what the anthropologists call 'reflexivity', the ability to reveal or at least debate how what you say about a phenomenon has a lot to do (some would say, everything to do) with who you are and where you're coming from'. Rosen acknowledges however that Orwell himself is aware that his reaction to Swift is biased, as Orwell also writes of the importance of reader response: 'what is the relationship between agreement with a writer's opinions and enjoyment of his work?'.<sup>3</sup> Rosen continues with his own opinion on the importance of a critical approach which includes cultural materialism and reader response, as he asserts

Some kind of transaction or enmeshing takes place between text and the particular reader in question, (realised, constituted and constructed as I have said, from the prevailing attitudes and conditions of the day), and it is out of this transaction that conclusions, such as these by Orwell, are drawn. However, Orwell also anticipates here one of the basic concepts of modern criticism the 'implied author' and indeed the 'implied reader'.

(2007 lecture)

Rosen contends that '[p]leasure, of course, as Orwell makes very clear, may not necessarily be about enjoying what we say we enjoy – it may well be the enjoyment of

feeling disgusted', thereby underlining the complexity of factors which drive readers' responses to texts. Arguing that it pervades the methodology and practice of current education, Rosen is adamant that dominant ideology influences not only what is read but also the reader response.

I have endeavoured here to show the importance of, and connections between, cultural materialism and reader response approaches to literature, and their particular relevance to an examination of those texts which I have selected as representative of novels for Young Adult girls. As I have argued, the socio-political background is inextricably bound up with literature and reading practices, and the next chapter will consider the development of the book culture between 1750 and 1890.

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<sup>1</sup> From Williams (1980:44).

<sup>2</sup> *The Politics of Response - Orwell's contribution to the questions of how we read and what reading is for.*

<sup>3</sup> Rosen quotes from George Orwell 'Politics vs. Literature: an examination of 'Gulliver's Travels' (1950) in Swift, *Modern Judgements* edited by A. Norman Jeffares (1968), London: Macmillan, pp. 192-209.

## Part 1

### Young Adult Girls and their Reading:

#### A theoretical framework

## Chapter 3

### The Book History of Novels for Young Adult Girls

‘our family ... are great Novel-readers  
and not ashamed of being so’

Jane Austen, *Letters* 18 December 1798

#### 3.1 The Importance of Book History

In their Introduction to *The Book History Reader* (2006) Finkelstein and McCleery attribute the development of studies in book history to ‘its relative distinctiveness from [Bibliography and Social History] through its emphasis upon print culture and the role of the book as material object within that culture’ (1). They elaborate later ‘[it] evolved...to incorporate work on the social and cultural conditions governing the production, dissemination and reception of print and texts’ (7). This recognition of an interactive relationship between the reading community, book production and the socio-cultural ethos of any time foregrounds the importance of examining novels for Young Adult girls within the criteria suggested by reader-response and cultural materialism theories.

This chapter will briefly consider the analysis of reading made by earlier commentators on the subject, who include Amy Cruse writing from an early twentieth-century perspective, and Robert Altick in the 1950s. Their assessments of reading habits from the eighteenth century onward also provide us with an insight into the perspectives from which Cruse and Altick researched their subjects. Their interpretation of facts might be described as a cultural prism through which reading history is refracted.

Between 1927 and 1935 Amy Cruse wrote three books in which she looked at the influence of different reading communities upon book production, both authors and publishers, in the centuries between the early middle ages and 1890.<sup>1</sup> The subtitle to her first book indicates the importance which she attaches to readers: *The Shaping of English Literature and the readers' share in the development of its forms*. Cruse's work is anecdotal rather than analytical, often placing her argument (particularly in this first volume) within descriptions of fictionalized readers, but referring to documents contemporary with the time she is discussing in order to support her account. In her Preface to *Shaping* she writes '[w]e look at the readers of past ages, and see ourselves as we should have been had we lived in their day' (1927:3). In this statement we can see that she recognizes both the connections between readers in the past and those of her (or indeed any) age, and the differences between them in any age other than the current. The connections and similarities among readers derive from the commonality of experience among us, which include those features noted in my first chapter that identify adolescent and Young Adult behaviour across the centuries. The differences among readers would result from the varying socio-cultural influences exerted by the particular time within which a reader lived. Among the reading communities which Cruse considers, she looks specifically at 'Women Readers', recording (though without indicating her precise sources) that the difference in women's education and reading was principally down to their social status. She evidences her argument with Erasmus's comments that 'women love books' (1927:168), extrapolating this quotation to his friendship with Sir Thomas More and More's highly educated teenage daughters, as well as monumental inscriptions commemorating the learning of daughters of the merchant class, and by that of Elizabeth I herself.

Cruse appears to find little evidence of women's reading from the death of Elizabeth until the early nineteenth century, when in 'The Clapham Set', among others, she writes of Susan Mein's (later Sibbald) recorded reading, noting her adolescent delight in Radcliffe's 'most horrible romance' (*The Mysteries of Udolpho*), which she and her sisters borrowed from a circulating library to which 'they secretly subscribed' (1930:76) because their father forbade his daughters to read the romances and novels in his own

collection. In this, and Cruse's following chapter 'The Schoolroom', she acknowledges that, while evangelical tracts were the recommended reading for girls (and boys), more entertaining reading was actively, though discreetly, sought by both '[y]oung ladies in the schoolroom [who were] a company cloistered and set apart...from their emancipated sisters, who had 'come out'' (78). It was these 'emancipated sisters', allowed from the age of around sixteen to venture into society, whose 'novel-reading fever' (93) is identified by Cruse as a major influence in the growth of the Minerva Press, and its library in London, swiftly followed by many other subscription and circulating libraries around the country. Cruse notes that the need for a subscription excluded many readers, but they in turn patronised 'many humbler establishments' who lent out second-hand novels. She also considers that '[t]he Minerva novels remained in favour until public taste changed and they went out of fashion' (107). Cruse ends this volume with a chapter on 'Drawing-Room Books', in which she reiterates her earlier contention that [t]he light reading of one generation is the heavy reading of another' (107), and notes the (unattributed) observation that five-volume works such as Burney's *Camilla* were deemed 'monstrous tedious' by the early nineteenth century.

Cruse's final volume in her survey of what we might term 'reader response' on the writing and publishing of books considers the enormous effect which the industrialisation of society had in the Victorian era. She recognises the mutual influence of people on books and books on people in 'a time of great movements both in life and thought' (1935:14). She restates her objective as 'telling...what works, great or small, were read...finding out who bought the copies and what they thought of the work' (15), and laments the lack of diaries which record this information. Instead she 'will imagine a household of the upper middle-class – the class which was quickly rising into special prominence' to describe reading culture in the early years of Victoria's reign (16). While, as Williams (1980) attests, the categorization of an upper middle class may not have been current as early as Cruse envisages, her recognition here that reading culture is inextricably linked to the socio-cultural influences in any age is a crucial one, and arguably places Cruse's work within the early experimental treatises of book history proper. Finkelstein and McCleery consider that 'the very recognition that a book is a



result of a collaborative...process' (2002:2) is one of the two aspects of bibliographical history which have passed into book history. They make no mention of Cruse, yet her work is a genuine attempt to place books and reading within the definition of book history used by Finkelsein and McCleery and quoted earlier in my chapter, which identifies its distinctiveness because of 'its emphasis upon print culture and the book as a material object within that culture' (1). Her work may be generalized and her approach unacademic, but through it she makes perceptive observations on the course of British reading and its readers. Her contentions that, 'readers are not without influence. What they ask for the writers take care to supply' (1927:1), and that 'great movements both in life and thought' (1935:14) influenced the taste of readers are allied to the ideas upon which reader-response theory, cultural materialism and book history were later based.

Richard Altick, commencing his work some ten years after Cruse had published her final volume, approaches the study of reading history from 'the historian's viewpoint' (1957:1), and elaborates his focus as 'the place of reading in an industrial and increasingly democratic society'. Like Cruse, and reader-response, cultural materialist and book history approaches, Altick seeks to explain the emergence of what he terms 'the democracy of print' (1). Recognizing that no systematic study of this process had hitherto been undertaken, he is principally interested in *why* reading patterns emerged and changed, and *how* these movements were caused. Writing of the period from 1800 to 1900, he acknowledges the importance of anecdotal evidence for the growth of interest in reading among what he terms 'the English Common Reader', but asserts that '[t]o account for it, and to fix it against the panoramic background of nineteenth-century English history, is a more complex task' (3). Jonathan Rose, in his article 'Rereading the English Common Reader: A preface to a history of audiences' (1992) reiterates the problems of sourcing historical detail about readers reading. Like Altick he recognizes the episodic, skewed and sketchy recording of reading, particularly before the emergence of the working-class autobiography at the beginning of the nineteenth century. He stresses that such material must be used with caution, as selective memory, both deliberate and unwitting, is almost unavoidable, and rarely provides a strictly accurate reading account.

In the same way that cultural materialists focus upon the experience of those ‘dissident readers’ who were not part of the dominant hegemony, Altick defines his ‘common reader’ as ‘a member of the working class, or...the ever expanding bourgeoisie’ (1957:7). He is particularly interested in the inter-relationship between reader and book, stating that ‘[w]e are beginning to understand the effect of general social conditions upon the production of literature; but the role of the reader – the consumer – has been largely neglected’ (8). As Cruse had stated that ‘readers are not without influence’ but not investigated her assertion in depth, so Altick investigates more assiduously, but nevertheless from the outset ‘hopes and believes’ far more extensive research by others will follow. Rose, in his essay inspired by Altick’s work, believes that ‘a history of audiences could lead us out of this deadlock [whether the reader writes the text or the text manipulates the reader] by revealing the interactions of specific texts and readers’ (Finkelstein and McCleery, 2006:433). Altick’s socio-historical survey, which overviews the growth of reading from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century before centring on the nineteenth, is at all times aware of the complexity of the reader/book relationship. Until the 1750s he identifies the purpose of books for young readers as almost exclusively instructional and the readership largely male and from amongst the skilled classes upward to the nobility. However he recognises that the growth of boarding schools for girls of the ‘upper and upper-middle classes’ ‘helped increase the eighteenth-century reading public’ (1957:45). He is clear that,

The time was ripe for a Richardson, and when *Pamela* appeared (1740-41) its success and that of the novels that followed it revealed the extent of the female audience which for several decades had been waiting for something to read. From that time onward, as the mounting flood of sentimental novels attests, women played an important part in the history of the English reading audience.

(45)

This was a crucial moment in the development of novels generally, and, as I shall show in a later chapter, for Young Adult girls in particular, and Altick emphasizes the importance of the reader-profile in influencing the books that were written, published and widely available. He writes that ‘the writing and sale of fiction became the occupation of hacks and booksellers who cultivated a shrewd awareness of the special interests and limitations

of their semi-educated audience' and identifies 'the first widespread discussion of the social effects of a democratized reading audience' (63). The audience under criticism, Altick notes, was 'people who had no business reading – women and domestic servants in particular' (64). He writes of the appalled reaction of the ruling class witnessing an alarming rise in interest in the rights of the common man. To that ruling class in the 1790s, observing the revolutionary activities that had previously taken place across the Atlantic and which were in train across the Channel, '[c]ompared with the threat of internal subversion, that of military invasion was small' (72).

Altick, (quoting from Boswell in his *Life of Johnson*), reiterates Samuel Johnson's thesis that any reading is better than none, and feels that '[r]eading had to be proved palatable before it could be made nourishing' (372). This, as I shall show in the following chapter, was a realization which encouraged authors such as Samuel Richardson to clothe the bare bones of their advice to the young (previously contained in instructional 'conduct books') in novel form, with the intention of more easily engaging their young readers. Altick recognizes that entertainment initially attracts the reader, but that scholarship, philosophy and political knowledge follow closely behind. It was through this evolutionary process of reading that readers were empowered to become what Rose terms 'often ruthless and insensitive editors' of the text by their interpretation (Finkelstein and McCleery, 2006:435). I shall show in the coming chapters that Young Adult girls could take from the novels that were written to guide them not only what the author intended, but other messages with relevance to their impending maturity as women. Moreover, the enthusiasm and demand of that audience at various times for novels of sense, sentiment, sensibility and sensation drove the market (authors and publishers) to produce a plentiful supply.

### **3.2 Twentieth-Century Studies of Women Readers**

Forty years after Altick, this aspect of reading history was the subject of studies by Jacqueline Pearson (*Women's Reading in Britain 1750-1835: A Dangerous Recreation* 1999) and Kate Flint specific to women's reading. Flint's important book *The Woman*

*Reader 1837-1914* (1993) was in part written, she states, ‘to offer suggestions as to why ‘the woman reader’ was an issue addressed with such frequency throughout the period’ (1993:10). She identifies ‘a dual, though continually intersecting focus’ (11) in which ‘attempts to legislate about reading can be seen... as a means of gaining control over subjectivity’ (11) but also ‘as a means of obtaining access to different types of knowledge’ (11) which would in turn engender ‘different expectations and standards’ (11). In her section on ‘Reading, Prohibition and Transgression, Flint acknowledges access to reading for girls was even more difficult and proscribed than that for women generally. She writes of ‘rebellious reading’ (210) and ‘the transgressive act’ which equates with the ‘dissident reader’ of cultural materialism. However she identifies this behaviour particularly with the adolescent reader who is not necessarily ‘breaching obvious moral imperatives or crossing class boundaries’ (210) but exerting ‘a different form of assertion: access into the domain of parental property’ (210). Flint cites detailed evidence from autobiographies and letters to show that from the accession of Victoria to the start of the First World War adolescent girls were reading to seek information about life – especially ‘the facts of life’. She suggests that as women moved into adulthood their own recording of their reading becomes less detailed, as ‘reading tends to play a greatly diminished part in their recorded perception of their lives’ (228). Having become women they felt that they had achieved some place in society; they might still seek an alternative place through their continued reading. Flint is in no doubt that the power of reading is ‘to offer a bridge between the consciousness and experience of many women’ (248), and she concludes by repeating her conviction that for a woman at this time ‘[reading] allowed her to assert her sense of selfhood, and to know that she was not alone in doing so’ (330).

Examining the century before Flint’s focus, Pearson prefaces her work by asserting that ‘it has been argued that by the end of the eighteenth century the majority of reading audiences were female’ (ix). She also specifically states that her work is aimed at ‘comprehending the authors, male as well as female, who wrote with this audience in mind’ (ix). Pearson reiterates Cruse, and later writers on book history, emphasizing the importance of the interaction between reader and text in interpreting, re-interpreting and

influencing not only subsequent writing, but subsequent social and political thought. She addresses the issue of what was considered to be suitable reading for Young Adult girls, quoting Catherine Macaulay as most unusual among eighteenth-century educational commentators in speaking in gender-free terms of ‘a young person’ rather than defining reading by age and gender (19). Citing Henry Kett’s *Emily: A Moral Tale* (1809), in which he depicts a good girl who reads with ‘pleasure’, she emphasizes that reading ‘may be seductive or protect from seduction; it is a means of emotional maturation or perpetual juvenility’. In the chapters of Part 2 I shall examine significant texts to which this observation is particularly relevant.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Shaping of English Literature* (1927), *The Englishman and his Books in the Early Nineteenth Century* (1930), *The Victorians and their Books* (1935).

## **Part 2:**

# **Young Adult Girls and their Reading:**

## **The Texts**

## Part 2

### Young Adult Girls and their Reading:

#### The texts

## Chapter 4

‘Inlisting the passions on the side of virtue’ ...

### Young Adult girls’ reading and the importance of *Sir Charles Grandison*

#### 4.1 Young Adult Readers and their Reading

In the next two chapters we shall see that two novels in particular repeatedly feature in the recorded reading from 1750 to the early 1800s of Young Adult girls: Samuel Richardson’s *Sir Charles Grandison* and Fanny Burney’s *Evelina*. In Part I, I sought to show the relevance of reader-response to a historical study of novels written to address the concerns of an audience of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Young Adult girls, and discussed the increasing recognition of the interactive relationship between reader and book production within the Book History movement. In order to put this into context I shall briefly consider the wider range of fiction mentioned in these Young Adult girl readers’ diaries and journals.

In Part I it was seen that the states of adolescence and emergent (i.e. Young Adult) adulthood, while recognized for many centuries, have only acquired scientific and social definition since the beginning of the twentieth century. In the light of the foregoing discussion of Young Adult girls, it follows therefore that in any consideration of earlier centuries, where the age of consent for girls coincided to a large extent with puberty, and marriage was not unusual at twelve years of age, adolescence and Young Adulthood are



less easy to differentiate than in later centuries. From 1275 (as established in the first *Statute of Westminster*) until 1875, the age of consent was twelve. In 1885 the *Criminal Law Amendment Act* raised it from thirteen to sixteen, and as the twentieth century drew nearer, emergence from puberty and adolescence was increasingly separated from marriage, and a more protracted preparation for adulthood and marriage (a Young Adulthood) was possible. Social class also affected age at marriage, with those girls from more prosperous and better educated families less likely to marry very early than those from less privileged backgrounds. Throughout my discussion of teenage girls' reading, this fact must be born in mind, and no absolute distinction can be made between adolescent and Young Adult girls. A girl of twelve might still be in the schoolroom, an adolescent, or she might be about to become a wife or mother, a Young Adult. At sixteen, or until she married, she could be regarded as a Young Adult, although her emotions might well still be adolescent, she would increasingly be preparing for her future role in life. Seth Lerer has recognized the development of this 'new category of girlhood' which arose from the fall in the age of menstruation (due largely to improving diet and healthcare) and the increase in the age at which girls usually married, which by the later nineteenth century had been legally ratified in the age of consent. He considers that by the middle of the nineteenth century this extended girlhood had been formally identified (though it was apparent long before this), citing Mary Cowder Clarke's *Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines* (1851-2) as evidence of a realisation of 'an increasing number of young women different from their earlier counterparts' (Lerer, 2008:232).

Generally unprepared by their education for extensive reading in the classics or philosophy, Young Adult girls turned to novels to provide both entertainment and instruction, and novelists of integrity, such as Richardson, swiftly identified the need for fiction of this type. The novelist Charlotte Smith, who also wrote books of guidance in the form of *Dialogues* and *Conversations* 'for the Use of Children and Young Persons' in 1795, 1796 and 1804, defended novel reading in *Rural Walks: in Dialogues intended for the Use of Young Persons* (1795). Here she argues that it is the lack of suitable education that is the cause of young women's addiction to novels. She considers that novels are 'almost the only reading the young women of fashion are taught to engage in' and that, in the absence of a proper education, 'admirable novels' (amongst which she includes those

of Richardson – especially *Grandison* - and Burney) ‘may awaken a wish for useful knowledge’ (quoted in Pearson, 1999:85-86). Even more radical is the assertion in Smith’s own fiction, that these novels, far from corrupting their readers with fanciful plots, instead prepare them for the curious twists of fate and unpredictable situations which real life will force upon them.

As primary evidence of reading, the diaries of contemporary girls offer an invaluable source. The diary of Elizabeth (Betsey) Wynne edited by her descendant, Anne Fremantle in 1935, with the earlier passages (originally in French) translated, provides us with an important record of what an actual adolescent female was reading from 1789. An image of Betsey appears in Appendix 3:308. During those years, from the time of the French Revolution, Europe was engulfed, physically, geographically and philosophically. Betsey Wynne was born on April 19<sup>th</sup> 1779, the second of the five daughters of Richard Wynne, a member of the gentry with an estate in Lincolnshire, and his French wife, Camille de Royer. In 1788, Mrs. Wynne’s health deteriorated, and the Wynne family sold their property in England and went to live with Richard’s married sister in Venice. From there they travelled widely within Italy, and eventually settled for a while at Wartegg in Switzerland, where many of Betsey’s entries relating to her reading were written. On January 4<sup>th</sup> 1792 Betsey Wynne records, writing in French (translated by the editor), ‘I read a little of Robinson Crusoe’ (97): this may have been in Daniel Defoe’s original 1719 English version, or in a French translation made in 1720-21. The earliest reference she makes to an English novel is on November 17<sup>th</sup> 1791, when aged twelve. Again writing in French, Betsey notes:

Mr. Jaegle makes us read an English book that is called  
*The Vicar of Wakefield* which is very pretty, interesting,  
well wrote and where there are some very good  
characters.

(86)

*The Vicar of Wakefield*, Oliver Goldsmith’s novel of 1766, is also described as being read by adolescent girls in Jane Austen’s *Emma* (1816), and in the American author Louisa Alcott’s *Little Women* (1868). Less than three years after its publication, in July 1769,

the sixteen-year-old Fanny Burney, in one of the first entries in her Diary, writes at length about Goldsmith's novel, indicating that, after an initial difficulty with it, she found that,

This book is of a very singular kind...before I was half way thro' the first volume, I was...surprised into tears, and in the second volume I really sobb'd. It appears to me, to be impossible any person could read this book thro' with a dry eye at the same time the best part of it is that which turns one's grief out of doors, to open them to laughter.

(1907:13)

It seems, however, from erasures in the text on the page, that Fanny, revising her Diaries many years later, substantially altered the tone of these comments, having at the age of sixteen found much less in *The Vicar* which entertained her. Faintly on the page appears the earlier, erased, comment 'The book is not at all satisfactory' (14).

Betsey Wynne's diary provides us with further detailed information on popular Young Adult reading, for on June 14<sup>th</sup> 1792, now writing her diary in English, she records 'I began to read "Paul and Virginia"[sic] book that Mrs. Braun brought here it is very pretty' (149). The Wynne girls obviously enjoyed it, for on the 20<sup>th</sup> her sister Eugenia, a year younger, records 'I read for the second time a novel that Madame de B brought for us, Paul and Virginia[sic], that is charming' (151-2). *Paul et Virginie*, a romantic novel by Jacques-Henri Bernadin de Saint-Pierre, was published in France in 1787, and several English translations followed almost immediately, copies of these appearing throughout the nineteenth century on the shelves of English country houses such as Sir Robert Walpole's Wolterton Hall, and in many humbler homes, as well as in several dramatic, operatic and balletic versions throughout Europe from the late eighteenth century to the present. Its continuing popularity was such that the eminent Victorian photographer Julia Margaret Cameron (great-aunt to Virginia Woolf), who favoured well-known literary subjects for her work, used it as the subject of a series of studies in 1864, an album of which she gave to her friend, the portrait painter G. F. Watts. Many other images of Paul and Virginia appeared, in a variety of media (see Appendix 3:309), as late as the mid-twentieth century, and the novel itself spawned a number of sequels by other authors. Paul and Virginia are star-crossed lovers who, both fatherless, are brought up together in

Mauritius, their lifestyle being simple (very much after the example of Rousseau's 1762 treatise on education *Emile*, a hugely influential text in the development of philosophy in the Romantic era), and who come to love each other. Virginia is sent back to France, but returns to the island as an adolescent. Her ship is wrecked on the rocks, and the heroine must shed her clothes in order that she may swim to safety, but she refuses to sacrifice her modesty and drowns, watched by the anguished Paul, who then dies of a broken heart. The novel's suitability for adolescent reading was questioned both by Mrs. Trimmer in *The Guardian of Education* (1802-06), where she states that 'the hero of the tale appears to be totally unable to govern his passions' (1803, quoted in Carpenter and Prichard 1984:396), and, nearly a century later by George Moore in his equally influential essay *Literature at Nurse, or Circulating Morals* (1885). Moore uses it as an example of the apparently idealistic improving text which may be far more damaging than those which are more overtly romantic or sensational. These he considers too unrealistic to influence young readers seriously. Moore asserts:

A pair of lovers – such as Paul and Virginie – separated by cruel fate, whose lives are apparently nothing but a long cry of yearning and fidelity, who seem to live, as it were, independent of the struggle for life, is the book far more often than any other leads to sin; it teaches the reader to look to a false ideal, and gives her – for men have ceased to read in England – erroneous and superficial notions of the value of life and love.  
(1976:22)

Despite Moore's concerns, we have no evidence that the young Betsey Wynne was harmed by her reading of *Paul and Virginia*, and indeed on October 8<sup>th</sup> 1792 she is reading the *Veillées du Chateau*, a collection of moral tales incorporated into a children's novel by Madame de Genlis written in 1784, and in its turn popular among young English readers in its translation in the following year as *Tales of the Castle*. From the superiority that her thirteen years confers upon her, she concedes that 'I think that book very good for the young people' (176). A year later she was reading Henry Fielding, commenting on October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1793 that 'I read again in Tom Johns [*sic*] the Society in the Coach being rather sulky...' (221). However, in the opinion of Samuel Johnson, her acknowledgement, even in the privacy of her diary, that she was reading *Tom Jones*

might indeed indicate that Betsey had been corrupted by her enjoyment of *Paul and Virginia*. Hannah More, writing about unprofitable reading in *Moral Sketches of Prevailing Opinions and Manners* (1819), comments that she ‘remembers to have heard Dr Johnson reprove a young lady in severe terms, for quoting a sentiment from Tom Jones [*sic*] – a book, he said, which, if a modest lady had done so improper a thing as to read, she should not do so immodest a thing as to avow’ (Breen, 1996:116).

#### 4.2 Girls Reading Grandison

When Tobias Smollett, though exasperated by the prolixity of all three of Samuel Richardson’s novels, nevertheless praised them for ‘inlisting the passions on the side of virtue’ (McKillop: 1936:181; quoted in Marks, 1986:16), he was voicing the opinion of enthusiastic Richardson readers, young and old, throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Published in seven volumes in 1753-54, Richardson’s last novel, *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (title page in Appendix 2:287), became an immediate bestseller, and although from the start its detractors were both vociferous and powerful (Byron notes in his diary on January 4<sup>th</sup> 1821 his delight at finding a grocer in Tunbridge Wells wrapping cheese and bacon in sheets from *Grandison*) it appears time and again not only on the shelves and in the catalogues of contemporary private, subscription and circulating libraries but, far more significantly, within the lists and comments made about their reading by contemporary adolescent and Young Adult diarists. It is this evidence which argues that *Grandison* was widely *read* as well as widely bought and borrowed. I have suggested that an examination of diaries and reading records between 1750 and 1870 irrefutably supports the interactive relationship between reader and book production, and we shall see that comments about *Grandison* alone provide ample proof. Sixty years after its publication, Jane Austen in *Northanger Abbey* (a novel exemplifying the influence over character formation which society imputed to reading), shows her seventeen-year-old heroine Catherine Morland, though currently an avid reader of the more modern genre of Gothic horror novels such as Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), protesting to her dismissive friend Isabella that *Grandison* ‘... is not like Udolpho at all; but yet I think it is very entertaining’ (2000:22).

Although she was four years younger than Austen's fictional Catherine, *Sir Charles Grandison* was the chosen reading of the thirteen-year-old Betsey Wynne from February 26<sup>th</sup> to April 11<sup>th</sup> 1793. That she found the subject matter compelling cannot be doubted, for her first diary entry relating to the book states (with typically individual spelling and punctuation), 'I staid at home and read *Charles Grandisson* that we have in French a charming book.' (192). Richardson's earlier novel *Clarissa* had been translated into French by the eminent novelist Abbé Prévost, in a version which substantially cut the original text and excluded from it, as Richardson complained to his correspondent Alexis Claude Clairaut, 'some of the most useful and pathetic Parts of the Piece'.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, reluctant as Richardson was to see *Grandison* subjected to a similar abridgement, within a year of its English publication, two French versions of his novel appeared, including that by Prévost which reduced the seven volumes to four.<sup>2</sup> His correspondence with Clairault confirms that neither version met with Richardson's approval. That it was Prevost's translation which Betsey Wynne found 'charming', we can be reasonably certain, for she always uses the spelling 'Grandisson' adopted by Prévost alone. Betsey, understandably, as the daughter of a French speaking mother and living abroad from the age of ten, spoke and read with equal facility in English and French. She writes in her diary on the following day:

The Day was beautifull and I enjoyed the sweetness of the weather in riding walking and sitting out in the fields with a Book—Charles Grandisson I am but at the second volume much amuses me...

(192-3)

She continues this entry with a reference to other, non-fiction, books she is reading:

I have begun to read also in English Robertson's history of America and Blairs [*sic*] lectures on Rhetoric and *belles-lettres*—We have bought these books at Basle where they are very well printed and cheap—

(193)

Robertson was published in Basel, but whether *Grandison* was bought there is not recorded. Betsey next records on March 24<sup>th</sup>, 'I read of Grandisson—That Book pleases me and interests me very much' (197), while five days later she is still absorbed in it, 'I read a great deal in Charles Grandisson' (197), finally noting on April 11<sup>th</sup> 1793, 'I have

done to read *Grandison* that Book has amused me vastly' (198). Betsey Wynne's reading of *Grandison* appears to have occupied a longer time, and certainly elicited more comment than any of the other texts mentioned by her in the diaries. Betsey Wynne was not alone in her admiration for *Sir Charles Grandison*, nor was it the only novel by Richardson eagerly read by late eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century female adolescent readers. In April 1779, at the age of thirteen, Mary Chorley, a Quaker from Lancashire, writes, 'Oh what a noble man Sir Charles Grandison is I do think...' (Vickery, 1998:7).

On November 23<sup>rd</sup> 1810, Shelley's cousin and first love, the eighteen-year-old Harriet Grove, an insatiable reader, records *Grandison* in her *Diary 1809-10*, among many popular best sellers and older novels shared within a family reading group: '...in the Evening we read Sir Charles Grandison – George much amused by Charlotte rapping out the d-m-n-s' (Hawkins, 90). Charlotte, her older sister, was reading it again in November 1814, and on March 16<sup>th</sup> 1820 states in her diary 'I read my favorite [*sic*] book, Sir Charles Grandison' (144), adding five years later, '[t]he oftener I read Richardson's works the more I admire them' (161). The 'respectable middle-class dissenting family' of Mrs. Anne Milnes Lumb was able to read all seven volumes, thanks to her willingness in 1757 to pay one shilling and twopence to borrow *Grandison* from the local circulating library in Yorkshire (Pearson, 163). Richardson's Preface to *Grandison* emphasizes his determination to leaven those potentially less engaging instructive qualities of his works with equal quantities of attractive storyline, thereby satisfying his audiences' thirst for entertainment. He asserts,

...the present Collection [*Grandison*] is not published ultimately, nor even principally, any more than the other two [*Pamela* and *Clarissa*], for the Sake of Entertainment only. A much nobler End is in View. Yet it is hoped that the Variety of Character and Conversations necessarily introduced into so large a Correspondence,...will enliven as well as instruct...

(1902: x-xi)

Without this 'enlivenment' it is unlikely that *Grandison* and the earlier two novels would have remained popular adolescent reading for the next one hundred years. That it entered

their reading so extensively may be judged by entries in the early diaries of Fanny Burney, later herself to be the writer of those immensely popular novels avidly read by adolescents, *Evelina* (1778), *Cecilia* (1782) and *Camilla* (1796). Reporting verbatim her discussion about novels with her friend Mr Seaton, the sixteen-year-old Fanny writes on Thursday, November 16<sup>th</sup> 1769,

... 'And what are you studying here?' said he, 'O ho, 'Marianne'! And did you ever read 'Le Paysan Parvenu'? They are the two best novels ever wrote, for they are pictures of nature, and therefore excel your Clarissas and Grandisons far away. Now Sir Charles Grandison is all perfection, and consequently, the last character we find in real life. In truth there's no such thing.'

F. Indeed! Do you think a Sir Charles Grandison *never* existed?

Mr. S. Certainly not! He's too perfect for human nature.

F. It quite hurts me to hear anybody declare a really and thoroughly good man never lived. It is so *much* to the disgrace of mankind.

Mr. S. Ay—you are too young to conceive its truth...

(1907:36)

From this exchange it may be inferred that both Fanny and the youthful Mr. Seaton, himself 'a very sensible and clever man, and a prodigious admirer of Hetty's' (Fanny's eldest sister, Esther), had an intimate knowledge of Richardson's novel, and that Fanny must have read both this and *The Vicar of Wakefield* before she was sixteen, her birthday being in June.

Like her fictitious heroine Catherine Morland, the adolescent Jane Austen read Richardson avidly, and was enthralled by *Grandison* in particular, as her nephew, James Edward Austen-Leigh records,

... [Jane Austen's] knowledge of Richardson's works was such as no one is likely again to acquire, now that the multitude and the merits of our light literature have called off the attention of readers from that great master. Every circumstance narrated in Sir Charles Grandison, all that was said or done in the cedar parlour, was familiar to her; and the wedding days of Lady L. and Lady G. were as well



remembered as if they had been living friends. ...  
(1951:89)

Her favourite brother, Henry Austen, confirms Jane's knowledge of Grandison from an early age, and wrote in the 'Biographical Notice' to accompany his posthumous publication of *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*,

... It is difficult to say at what age [my sister] was not intimately acquainted with the merits and defects of the best essays and novels in the English language. Richardson's power of creating, and preserving the consistency of his characters, as particularly exemplified in Sir Charles Grandison, gratified the natural discrimination of her mind...

(December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1817)

She certainly knew it intimately by the age of sixteen, when in 1791-92 she began to adapt sections of the story for stage performance by members of the Austen family.<sup>3</sup> *Sir Charles Grandison or The Happy Man* is a rapid-action, almost slapstick play (image in Appendix 2:288), which concentrates on the storyline of Richardson's novel, excluding the Italian action, providing closure for Grandison's original fiancée Clementina, inventing some minor characters (probably to suit the family players who would perform it), and omitting the moral sentiments. Stylistically it is unmistakable Austen, one of the earliest of her writings, following *Love and Freindship* [sic] (c.1787) and preceding *Elinor and Marianne* (c.1795), the early version of *Sense and Sensibility*. It is the work of a lively adolescent mind permeated with *Grandison*, a mind whose interest was firmly in the action, the excitement and the love stories rather than Richardson's intended 'nobler End'. At much the same time, Austen was writing her own epistolary novel *Lesley Castle*, which remained unpublished until the late twentieth century, an adolescent parody of the genre which is as full of dramatic incident as *Grandison* is lacking, its female correspondents as consistently shallow and vain as Richardson's are untiringly thoughtful and modest. Her intimate acquaintance with the conventions of this genre infuses the writing, and constantly reminds readers of her sources. Throughout her life, Jane Austen's letters include references which compare her own life and observations with those of characters in *Sir Charles Grandison*, in particular with its heroine Harriet Byron.<sup>4</sup> That Richardson's text was totally embedded in her consciousness is witnessed

by the intertextual references in her own novels. A parallel with Harriet Byron's analogy between Sir Charles Grandison and the biblical Adam, in which she finds the former to be superior and asserts that he would not even have tasted the forbidden fruit, is found in *Mansfield Park* (1814) when Edmund Bertram recognizes and rejects Mary Crawford's behaviour. Moreover, Jocelyn Harris, who edited *Sir Charles Grandison* for Oxford University Press in 1972, argues that Austen's own characters in her later novels reflect Richardson's considerable influence on her writing, alleging in *Jane Austen's Art of Memory* (1989) that Austen 'built' *Sense and Sensibility* on *Pamela*, *Clarissa*, and *Sir Charles Grandison*, 'rewrote' *Grandison* in *Pride and Prejudice*, and 'transposed it into a more serious key' in *Mansfield Park*. It is Harris' opinion that this was a deliberate strategy to refer to material already familiar to her readers, an intertextual allusion to popular and influential works.

The available readership for novels had increased considerably during the early eighteenth century, and was to grow even faster thereafter, as literacy and opportunities for education generally became more available to clerical workers and artisans. Educational opportunities for the male children of the aristocracy, gentry and professional classes were already well established, and boarding schools for girls in these social categories had emerged in the previous century as the successors to the pre-Reformation nunneries in which they had previously been taught. Although rarely providing an education of depth or particular quality, they did produce a growing population of literate female adolescents whose domestic lifestyle offered increasing amounts of leisure time in which to read. In *Grandison* Harriet Byron's grandmother, Mrs. Shirley, laments the lack of opportunity for education afforded women in general, commenting that,

Men, in common conversation, have laid it down for a rule of good breeding, not to talk before women of things they don't understand; by which means an opportunity of improvement is lost; a very good one too; one that is approved by the ablest persons who have written on the education of children; because it is a means of learning insensibly, without the appearance of a task.

(VI:347)

Nevertheless there is evidence that literacy was increasingly permeating the lower-middle and working classes, whose attendance at the constantly expanding number of Sunday Schools offered this new access to books and reading skills. James Lackington, a shoemaker turned bookseller, claimed in the 1790s that,

the poorer sort of farmers, and even the poor country people in general, ...shorten the long winter nights by hearing their sons and daughters read tales, romances, etc. and on entering their houses, you may see *Tom Jones*, *Roderic Random*, and other entertaining books stuck up on their bacon-racks, &c. If John goes to town with a load of hay, he is charged to be sure not to forget to bring home 'Peregrine Pickle's Adventures', and when Dolly is sent to market to sell her eggs, she is commissioned to purchase 'The History of Pamela Andrews'. In short, all ranks and degrees now READ.

(Altick, 1957:41)

Although there seems little doubt that this claim is largely advertising hyperbole employed to help Lackington's sales, nevertheless it indicates that the aspirations of lower-middle and working class people in the second half of the eighteenth century most definitely include fiction reading. As Matthew Grenby notes in his chapter in *Popular Children's Literature in England* (Briggs *et al*:2008), examining the time 'Before Children's Literature', greatly abridged versions of several of the titles mentioned by Lackington, advertised in 1774 by the publisher Richard Snagg as 'New Chap Books', at a cost of ninepence each, appear in the British Library's collection. Among them is an eighty-two-page booklet titled *The History of Sir Charles Grandison and the Hon. Miss Byron; in which is Included Memoirs of a Noble Italian Family* (2008:28, note 9). For the ordinary worker, full length books were prohibitively expensive, and their opportunities for reading further constrained by the lack of extended leisure time and light in which to indulge anything but Sunday Bible reading, but for apprentices and indoor servants such opportunities might not only exist, but their participation be actively encouraged. Both groups would probably have access to books or wages with which to buy or borrow them, together with some leisure time and lighting in which to read. Lerer considers that the abridged versions of Richardson's *Pamela*, of which there were several after that published in 1756, were 'much like the chapbooks of Defoe's *Robinson*

*Crusoe*...creat[ing] narratives of social fantasy and moral guidance for a gendered generation' (2008:232). Pamela, the eponymous fifteen-year-old servant in Richardson's novel, is herself an avid reader, the author therein not only modelling a habit he hoped to encourage amongst servants, but also reflecting a practice already established in the most enlightened country houses where, as at Felbrigg Hall in Norfolk, a servant's library was provided for their use. Indeed Harriet, once married and the mistress of a large household, makes it her business to examine the existing arrangements for the servants, and writes to Mrs. Shirley,

I was pleased with one piece of furniture in the housekeeper's room, which neither you, madam, nor my aunt, have in yours...It is a servant's library, in three classes, one of books of *divinity* and *morality*; another of *housewifery*; a third of *history*, true adventures, voyages and innocent amusement...As new books come out, the doctor buys such as he thinks proper to range under these three classes.

(VII:50)

It is likely that novels such as Richardson's own would have been found among those books of 'innocent amusement'. Richardson was determined that *Grandison* should be accessible to all classes, and his language, allusions and settings were almost entirely from popular culture, criticized by Lady Mary Montagu Wortley, in her annotation to her own copy, as '[m]ean sentiments meanly expressed' (quoted in Harris:xiv).

From contemporary personal diaries, the recorded conversations and the writings of adolescent writers in the century after the publication of *Sir Charles Grandison*, it is possible, therefore, to support my assertion that Richardson's novels in general, and *Sir Charles Grandison* in particular, were widely and appreciatively read by this youthful audience.<sup>5</sup> For the book to fall within my definition of the development of a fiction for young adults, however, the author's own comments concerning his purpose in writing *Sir Charles Grandison* must be examined. It remains now, therefore, to discuss why they were so popular, and whether Richardson himself specifically wrote to address this audience of young adults.

### 4.3 Richardson's Remit

Even if they did not use that precise term to describe the teenage years, the eighteenth century was no less aware of the complexities of adolescence than is the twenty-first. Society recognized the tumult of emotions and passions, and the importance of the decisions that Young Adults needed to make at this time. These passions could draw the young in opposing directions, and could result, with equal ease but with radically different outcomes, in the production of victims, of heroes and heroines, or even of both simultaneously. Overwhelmed by the superfluity of passion, the adolescent was seen as intensely vulnerable, bereft of that experience, knowledge and training which would allow a wise decision to be made about these passions, and which would guide them along the 'paths of virtue'.

In the preface to his famous translation of the *Fables* of Aesop (also one of Richardson's most successful publishing ventures), Sir Roger L'Estrange had stated, '*Children* are but *Blank Papers*, ready indifferently for any Impression, good or bad' (1692:iii). This statement was itself a reprise of the concept of the child being a 'tabula rasa'. As the child grew older, it was believed that only by careful instruction, constant restraint and good example could adolescents be guided into a virtuous and useful adulthood. Society viewed civilization in hierarchical terms ('subordination' was Dr Johnson's definition of the term), and therefore it was adults, who themselves had passed safely through this dangerous developmental stage and were able to guide the next generation in similar fashion, who were seen as the necessary guardians of youth's emergence into adulthood. Isaac Watts, writing in his *Discourse on the Education of Children and Youth* (1741), deplored the current attitude of mid- eighteenth-century youth who 'fancy themselves compleat Men or Women at twelve or fifteen; and they accordingly judge and manage for themselves entirely, and too often despite all Advice of their Elders' (1825:387). The custom of earlier centuries, he felt, to deny full adulthood to all those under the age of thirty was a far more satisfactory attitude. It was, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to prevent this dangerous state of affairs, and in the eighteenth, to remedy it, that a large numbers of authors had published Conduct Books, manuals of advice for those entering adulthood. These were strictly works of non-fiction, providing wise

counsel on all those aspects of life which would render the receptive reader an honourable and rounded person on their entry into adulthood – at which point they themselves would be better enabled to be considered fit and proper persons to instruct the younger generation.

Of the many sage authors providing these books of instruction, Daniel Defoe was one of the most prolific, with nearly two dozen different works aimed at producing the perfect gentleman, gentlewoman, or tradesperson. The best known of these was *The Family Instructor* (1715 and several subsequent editions and revisions), the different volumes of which offered advice to a variety of family members, together with regulations for the servants of the household. Defoe's book shows a subtle move away from sheer didacticism towards a framework in which his instruction was both more accessible and more entertaining. His readers encompassed a wide social spectrum, from the family of George I to the (literate) man in the street. His aim was to set behaviour within its Christian foundation, and he organized *The Family Instructor* as if it were a catechism, with a child asking questions of its knowledgeable but non-practising parents. It is in this way that Defoe provides an ongoing narrative which holds the attention of his readers.

As part of this tradition of conduct books and model lessons for life, Richardson himself had published a series of model letters for would-be correspondents to follow and adapt to their own uses. As an adolescent (beginning at the age of eleven, Richardson claimed), he had gained a reputation for letter writing, offering his services to the young ladies of the neighbourhood in the furthering of their amours. He was a prolific letter writer on his own account, taking instruction in order to perfect the art, and then publishing his correspondence (suitably devoid of personal information) as model letters, with the intention also that its users might learn 'How to think and Act Justly and Prudently, in the Common Concerns of Human Life', thereby also claiming it as a form of conduct book. These letters are filled with detail, with dialogue, and with perceptive characterization, and clearly anticipate the epistolary novels he would later write. In addition to conduct books, the other popular format for advice manuals was letters, such as those of Sir Matthew Hale (*A Letter to his Children, Advising them how to behave themselves in*

*speech*, 1683). It is therefore not surprising that these influences would lead Richardson inexorably towards his ‘new species of writing’ (1928, 164-65).

In the Preface to *Sir Charles Grandison*, Richardson, writing as ‘The Editor of the following Letters’, rehearses his intention in writing the three epistolary novels, *Pamela* (1740), *Clarissa* (1748) and *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753-54). This was to examine and commend the characters not only of virtuous women whilst condemning that of predatory men, but also to redress the balance of men’s behaviour encountered in the earlier two works, intending in the last novel, to depict for the imitation of its readers ‘a man acting uniformly well through a variety of trying scenes’ (1902:I:x). As we have seen, Richardson continues,

...the present collection is not published ultimately, nor even principally, any more than the other two, for the sake of entertainment only. A much nobler end is in view. Yet it is hoped the variety of characters and conversations ... will enliven as well as instruct.

(x-xi)

It is clear from his correspondence, edited in seven volumes in 1804 by Anna Laetitia Barbauld that Richardson had not intended to write a further novel after *Clarissa* (1748). Even when he embarked upon it, he had no clear plan, as a letter to his friend Johannes Stinstra shows, for he states that when he had ‘ended one Letter, [he] hardly knew what his next would be’ (2 June 1753, in Carroll:235). It was, in fact, largely because of the encouragements of his literary confidants, and upon their constant suggestions of subject matter and plot that Richardson set out once more to instruct a readership which in his view remained, despite his earlier efforts, largely unconverted to virtue. That his advisors for the progress of the *Grandison* story were women is important for our appreciation that his text was intentionally written for a youthful female audience. Indeed two of his constant correspondents, Catherine Talbot and Elizabeth Carter, saw themselves as ‘two Pygmalionesses’ in their influence over the development of plot and character, recognizing in their input the reversal of the gender relationship of sculptor and statue in the Pygmalion legend.<sup>6</sup>

In his Preface Richardson has clearly stated his objectives and linked his novel with the longstanding tradition of conduct books; he goes on to emphasize that the writers of the letters in *Grandison* are ‘young ladies of polite education, and of lively spirits’ (Carroll: 235), in other words identical with the audience for whom he is writing. It is interesting to observe that the ‘Lover of Virtue’, the anonymous author of *Critical Remarks on Sir Charles Grandison, Clarissa and Pamela. Enquiring Whether they have a Tendency to corrupt or improve the Public Taste and Morals* (1754) considers that Richardson’s novels are ‘designed for the perusal of people in all ranks’ (1950:7), and that he has ‘fallen upon a manner of writing, in a series of Letters, which is very affecting and capable of great improvements’ (56). This is an uncharacteristically generous remark within a pamphlet which is otherwise filled with typically robust eighteenth-century critical analysis, a vituperative condemnation of Richardson’s output which echoes the passion of his contemporary detractors, notably Henry Fielding. The Lover of Virtue continues,

Grandison is an inconsistent angel,  
Lovelace is an absolute devil, and Booby is a perfect Ass;  
Pamela is a pert little minx, whom any man of common  
sense or address might have had on his own terms in a week  
or a fortnight, Harriet appears to be everything, and yet  
may be nothing, except a ready scribe, a verbose  
letter-writer; and as to Clarissa, I believe you will own  
yourself, that I have done you ample justice.

(58)

The anonymous author reprimands Richardson for his poor understanding of the finer points of novel writing, deploring his lack of knowledge of the Classics, and justifying his criticism with the assertion that ‘[t]he influence of culture, habit, and education, over human minds is prodigious and inconceivable. It is so great and extensive, that perhaps it is utterly impossible to determine what principles or conceptions we receive from nature, and what from other sources’ (26). It is precisely this idea, the intention that his work should influence and instruct the behaviour of his readers, which informed Richardson’s writing. The Lover of Virtue’s assertion, that ‘Love, eternal Love, is the subject, the burthen of all your writings; it is the poignant sauce, which so richly seasons Pamela, Clarissa and Grandison, and makes their flimzy nonsense pass so glibly down’ (38) was



most perceptive, for it was exactly this which made Richardson's writing so popular with his younger readers. Needless to say, the Lover of Virtue does not approve of this, but without doubt eighteenth-century Young Adult girls did, and Richardson was fully aware of what should be included to ensure that his work would both 'enliven as well as instruct'. In a letter to William Duncombe on October 22<sup>nd</sup> 1751 Richardson had acknowledged the need to interlace the instructional, moralistic content of his writing with those traditional elements of popular romance, conflict and love, so avidly consumed by earlier generations of adolescent (and older) readers, the 'Nugatories of Boys and Girls' (Carroll, 195). Bruner (1986) identifies the difference in impact on the reader of contrasted narrative modes, between a 'good story' and a 'well-formed argument' (11). The latter derives, he says, from the 'paradigmatic or logico-scientific [mode]' and leads to 'good theory, tight analysis, logical proof, sound argument and empirical discovery guided by reasoned hypothesis' (12-13). He continues,

But paradigmatic "imagination" (or intuition) is not the same as the imagination of the novelist or poet...The imaginative application of the narrative mode leads instead to good stories, gripping drama, believable (though not necessarily "true") historical accounts. It deals in human or human-like intention and action and the vicissitudes and consequences that mark their course. It strives to put its timeless miracles into the particulars of experience, and to locate the experience in time and place.

(13)

Bruner concludes therefore that narrative engages the reader far more powerfully than the paradigmatic, and adds that the author's implicit moralizing intention may be realized:

not to evoke a standard reaction but to recruit whatever is most appropriate and emotionally lively in the reader's repertory. So "great" storytelling, inevitably, is about compelling human plights that are "accessible" to readers. But at the same time, the plights must be set forth, with sufficient subjunctivity to allow them to be *rewritten* by the reader, rewritten so as to allow play for the reader's imagination.

(35)

In combining those elements so as both to enliven and instruct, Richardson considerably enhanced the reputation and status of the English novel, which had become regarded as a rather disreputable genre unfit for the polite reader. By the late 1740s the English romance had fallen out of fashion, being considered as only slightly better than the French heroic romances which were so enthusiastically attacked by writers such as Charlotte Lennox, whose heroine in *The Female Quixote* (1752), Arabella, derives all her knowledge from such reading, and deludes herself about life, imagining that it can be lived as a French romance. With Samuel Johnson, Richardson advised and encouraged Lennox in this work, and obviously agreed with her thesis that such works were totally unsuitable, indeed harmful, for young women. Although it would be more than a century before the theory that novel reading encouraged impetuous and undesirable behaviour among female readers was dispelled (Wollstonecraft, on 'Reading' in *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787:48) still considers it imparts 'a wrong account of the human passions'), the following pages will examine how *Sir Charles Grandison* pacified the anxieties of many adults seeking suitable reading for their charges while amply satisfying those young readers' desire for a text with which they could engage enthusiastically and with enjoyment.

#### **4.4 *Sir Charles Grandison* as Fiction for Young Adult Girls**

In order to consider the claim that *Grandison* is fiction written for Young Adults, it is necessary to revisit the definition both for the term Young Adult, and the genre which were put forward in the first chapters of this thesis. The elements specific to this genre are those of the *Bildungsroman*, linked closely with the age of the readers and their journey towards emotional, spiritual and educational maturation. Writing in the context of modern Young Adult fiction, Kate Agnew and Maureen Nimon's entry in the *Cambridge Guide to Children's Books in English* (2001) defines it as addressing 'romance, relationships, and the difficulties of family life. It is predominantly concerned with real life rather than fantasy and frequently examines 'issues' considered to be of interest to teenage readers. It deals with a teenage identity which differs from that of either adulthood or childhood...' (775). More recently the identifying characteristics of fiction for Young Adults are defined in an article by Robyn McCallum for the *Oxford*

*Encyclopedia of Children's Literature* (2006). In this she enumerates fifteen common thematic and ideological concerns of which she states 'Underpinning the list is a common pre-occupation with subjectivity, especially the development of notions of selfhood, relationships between self and others and between individuals and society' (4:217).

In *Grandison* Richardson exhibits all of these identifiers. Patricia Meyer Spacks, in *The Adolescent Idea* (1981), asserts that '[t]wo hundred years ago, few people spoke of adolescence' (90). She records that Dr Johnson, in his *Dictionary* (1755), defined the word as referring to 'The age succeeding childhood, and succeeded by puberty' (90), while puberty is 'the time of life in which the two sexes begin first to be acquainted' (90), and youth 'the part of life succeeding to childhood and puberty' (90). Spacks speculates that this was a deliberate attempt 'to avert the eyes from the disturbing social and psychological phenomena of the teenage years' (90), but continues that it is certain that nevertheless, eighteenth-century adults:

prove vividly aware of this. Adolescence presented practical problems precisely because no one had a clear concept of it. Parents, teachers, clergymen apparently expected the young to behave either like children or like adults. In their teen-age years, the young behaved, instead, like adolescents...Although didactic writers rarely defined youth as a separate time of life, their comments indicate their awareness of special problems associated with the period following puberty but preceding the full assumption of adult responsibility. And the qualities that they attribute to adolescents indicate some reasons that the young became heroes and heroines for much of the century's fiction and drama.

(90)

Spacks does not include *Grandison* among those Richardson texts she considers in detail, but it is clear from contemporary records of adolescent reading that it was this novel which both Richardson and his young readers felt best encapsulated all those adolescent dilemmas parents, teachers and clergymen so feared. Although its title, and the author's stated intention indicate Richardson's wish to portray a *man* of honour where his earlier two novels placed women of virtue as the central characters, the novel more prominently concerns the relationship of Harriet Byron with a variety of suitors, and this, together

with Grandison's reaction and his own complicated amours, are reported through Harriet's correspondence. Thus it is she, 'just turned of twenty, but looks not more than seventeen' (1902:5), rather than Grandison, the older character, who as the conduit of the novel's action becomes the focus of our attention. This fulfils another crucial identifier of Young Adult fiction: that the story should be told from the point of view of the young adult protagonists, and reflect their interpretation of events. Harriet is an orphan, free from parental pressures to marry, and she is therefore empowered to make her own decisions, unlike Clarissa, in Richardson's earlier novel, who narrowly escapes an arranged marriage. However, freedom of choice brings its own burdens when Harriet is besieged by morally and intellectually inferior suitors, having left her Aunt and Uncle Selby's home for a visit to her cousins in London. After Harriet's rescue by Grandison from her abduction at a masquerade by one of her suitors, the infatuated Sir Hargrave Pollexfen, she realizes that she must constantly choose between reason, inclination and duty, and that this will constrain her actions and reactions. In her preparations for the fateful masquerade, Harriet has exhibited the inconsistent behaviour typical of a young and unsophisticated girl, writing at length and in considerable detail about her costume to her confidant Lucy Selby, having stated 'but I by no means like mine, because of its gaudiness: the very thing I was afraid of' (167), and finishing her letter with expressions of totally contradictory emotions,

What a sparkling figure I shall make!...  
...I never had any notion of masquerades. Expect  
particulars of all in my next. But pray, my Lucy,  
be fanciful, as I sometimes am, and let me know  
how you think everything will be beforehand;  
and how many pretty fellows you imagine,  
in this dress, will be slain by your

HARRIET BYRON.  
(168)

This agrees with Hall's observations on the dichotomy of emotions and behaviour experienced in adolescence, that:

[t]he joys of life are never felt with so keen a relish;  
youth lives for pleasure...the genius for extracting pleasure  
and gratification from everything is never so great. But  
this, too, reacts into pain and disphoria...Young people

weep and sigh, they know not why; depressive are almost as characteristic as expansive states of consciousness.  
(1904:77)

Richardson shows an understanding of adolescent and Young Adult behaviour, both in this novel and the earlier *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, whose heroines, at sixteen- and eighteen-years old respectively, are even younger than Harriet, and is frequently credited with being the first to write with psychological insight into his characters. Certainly he recognizes and portrays with skill the conflict of emotions at play within the adolescent mind. His Preface to *Clarissa* states this quite clearly,

...the letters on both sides are written while the hearts of the writers must be supposed to be wholly engaged in their subjects...they abound not only with critical situations, but with what may be called instantaneous descriptions and reflections, which may be brought home to the breast of the youthful reader.

(1985:35)

Unlike the accounts of the lives of the heroines of Romance, and even of Richardson's earlier novels, Harriet Byron's account of her experiences contains relatively little action apart from her abduction. Instead her copious correspondence is filled with the minutiae of everyday life, and even those events which concern Grandison himself in Italy, and which Harriet can only report by copying out his or others' letters for her correspondents' information, are therefore filtered through her own interpretation. With its immense length and considerable detail, Richardson's novel becomes the eighteenth-century equivalent of a modern soap opera, detailing exhaustively not merely the major events, but particularly the humdrum household and personal life. It must have provided for those readers the same feeling of intimacy with its characters and involvement in their day-to-day life, however foolish and mundane. Above all its seven volumes can induce, even in the twenty-first-century reader, the compulsive need to continue to discover everything about the people and events therein, which might amount to an unconscious addiction to every scrap of information. Despite its title, the use of Harriet as narrator, the conduit for the story, places her at its centre, and because of this we are aware of her feelings for Grandison from very early in the novel. Before this point we have become

accustomed to her descriptions of the energetic refusal of young men for whom she has no feeling, as when she writes to Lucy her views on her meeting with Mr. Fowler,

And so, my dear, Mr. Fowler seems to think he has met  
with a woman who would make a fit wife for him: but your  
Harriet, I doubt, has not in Mr. Fowler met with a man she  
can think a fit husband for her.

(I:42)

When Sir Rowland comes to press his nephew's suit, she turns his questions in a spirited manner worthy of one of Jane Austen's heroines,

Are you, madam, are you absolutely and *bona fide*  
disengaged? Or are you not?

As this, Sir Rowland, answered I, is a question I can best  
resolve, I frankly own, that I am disengaged.

...I hope, madam, you say true: I hope I may rely on it, that  
your affections are not engaged.

You may, Sir Rowland. I do not love, even in jest, to be  
guilty of an untruth... You hint that I have seen the  
gentleman: now, I have never yet seen the man whose  
addresses I could encourage.

(I:47-8)

Harriet carefully plays with words here, answering Sir Rowland accurately yet pertly, and despite her protestation that she is 'much nearer to twenty-one than *nineteen*, I assure you' (48), she displays an adolescent delight in misleading Fowler's effusively obsequious uncle. We particularly note, therefore, her reaction to a visit from Grandison and his sister Charlotte, noted in Volume I, Letter XXXIX,

One word with you, good Miss Byron; taking my hand and  
leading me to the window.  
How the fool coloured! I could feel my face glow! O  
Lucy!

(I:303)

Again it is the reaction of an immature girl, but this time one who has fallen in love for the first time. These are scenes likely to strike a chord of recognition in the hearts of Richardson's Young Adult readers. His years of writing letters for young women in love appear to have given him a deep insight into the confused and contradictory emotions and

behaviour of this vulnerable age group, and intimately informed his ability to write for them.

As in soap opera, the lives of those who inhabit Harriet and Grandison's world are described in detail, not only in the major strands of Grandison's honourable return to his earlier Italian love Clementina, but also sub-plots such as in Charlotte's courtship and rebellious early period of marriage. Scenes of marital discord probably fascinated the eighteenth-century literary voyeur no less than they do the twenty-first century soap enthusiast, and Harriet's depiction of Charlotte's reluctance to submit to her husband's domestic authority is extremely detailed and vivid. Richardson has shown Charlotte to be a determined young woman, who believes that Harriet must marry Grandison, and expresses her opinions with the unthinking passion of youth: 'You *must* be Lady Grandison, my dear: *indeed* you must...Come, come Harriet, you *shall* be Lady Grandison, still...' (IV:121). Charlotte is equally determined not to marry Lord G --- in haste,

What a deuse, to be married to a man in a week's time, with whom I have quarrelled every day for a fortnight past! --- Pride and petulance must go down by degrees sister. A month, at least, is necessary, to bring my features to such a placidness with him, as to allow him to smile in my face.  
(IV:132-3)

A Young Adult girl, nevertheless she displays a typically adolescent attitude, for she cannot decide whether to be 'sullen' or 'saucy' (133), and once the date is set, 'thr[ows] herself into a chair' (139) and tells Harriet 'I don't like next Tuesday by any means' (139). When pressed as to whether it is just the day she objects to, she exclaims 'I do not like the man', and replies to Harriet's query 'Is there any other man whom you like better?' with a petulant 'I can't say that neither'. Asked by Harriet to relate the scene of a triple wedding between their acquaintances, her letter contains bathetic descriptions worthy of any modern television soap opera:

Unreasonable, wicked, cruel Byron! To expect a poor creature so near her execution, to write an account of other people's behaviour in the same circumstances! The matrimonial noose has hung over my head for some time

past: and now it is actually fitted to my devoted neck ---  
Almost choked, my dear!  
...One of the brides, I forget which, fainted away; another  
half fainted ----saved by timely salts; the third, poor soul,  
wept heartily...  
six coaches, four silly souls in each...

(IV:143-4)

‘The perverse Charlotte’ (151) continues in this contradictory mood, and refuses a church wedding, ‘put up her pretty lip’ (151), and treats Lord G--- as badly as any modern teenager, with, Harriet says, ‘Such a kittenish disposition in her’ (155). Charlotte reproves him for coming to speak with her and Harriet by shouting ‘Hey-day, sir! who expected you?... You give yourself pretty airs, my lord---don’t you?’, and in response to his swinging his hat in agitation at this greeting, ‘What sir, am I to be buffeted, sir?--- ’ (152-3).

The eighteenth-century fear that the passions exert a particular power over youth, and the concern of adults to provide models of suitably restrained adolescent behaviour both in conduct books and in the fiction provided for these young readers, is endlessly reiterated in the writings of all those interested in their upbringing. The artist Hogarth frequently portrayed the difficult decisions faced by eighteenth-century young men and women, as in the image in Appendix 2:287, and, in the six-part series *Marriage à-la-Mode* (1743-45), the consequences of poor decisions. William Dodd, in his *Sermons to Young Men* (1771) recommends that they should shun ‘all those pleasures that are likely to enkindle their passions’ (quoted in Spack:92), because ‘in their state of life, such Pleasures must be particularly dangerous, when reason hath not yet attained its perfect state, and the passions are in full strength and power’ (92). It is this exposure to the type of ‘pleasures that are likely to kindle their passions’ which Harriet encounters at the masquerade, and it leads in turn to her confused emotional attitude, discussed earlier in this section, and to her abduction by the embodiment of passions out of control, Sir Hargrave Pollexfen. We might wonder whether Richardson’s original readers would have assumed that Sir Hargrave had not been guided into more moderate, rational behaviour by appropriate reading in his own youth.



For Harriet however, this dreadful episode is hugely formative, and underpins her future behaviour, which, to a twenty-first-century reader appears irritatingly self-sacrificing, prepared as she is to forgo Grandison's attentions when he returns to his honourable pursuit of Clementina. While modern readers may agree with Catherine Macauley whose comment on novels in her *Letters on Education* (1790) recommends that 'I would postpone the perusal of this [*Grandison*] ...to an age when the judgement is sufficiently ripe to separate the wheat from the chaff' (Breen, 1996:63), most eighteenth-century adolescent readers, and one notable female editor and critic disagreed. Macauley's argument was that:

In the history of Sir Charles Grandison, there is not so much sublime pathos [as in *Clarissa*]; but the hero is a more unexceptional character than that of Clarissa Harlow. Indeed, virtue in him, and in the heroine of the piece, appears sometimes in attitudes ridiculously stiff, and in a garb too pompous for exact imitation; it also united to a visible portion of conceit...

(63)

However Anna Barbauld edited and reprinted several eighteenth-century novels in *The British Novelists* (1820), including Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe* and to accompany these, writing 'On the Origin and Progress of Novel-writing' recommends *Grandison* as one of the few novels which 'prepare a young lady for the neglect and tedium of life which she is perhaps doomed to encounter'. She continues:

If the novels she reads are virtuous, she has learned how to arm herself with proper reserve against the ardour of her lover; she has been instructed how to behave with the utmost propriety when run away with, like *Miss Byron*...

(94)

In admitting that novels 'add to the innocent pleasures of life' Barbauld is less critical of that form of reading than most of her contemporaries, and states that '[t]he unpardonable sin in a novel is dullness: however grave or wise it may be, if the author possesses no powers of amusing, he has no business to write novels; he should employ his pen in some more serious part of literature' (91). For Barbauld novels are an important method of inculcating the rational control of passions in young readers, as 'they have had a very strong effect in infusing principles and moral feelings' (91). In the context of a

reconsideration of the development of fiction for Young Adults we note the importance of her assertion that,

[I]t is impossible to deny that the most glowing and impressive sentiments of virtue are to be found in many of these compositions, and have been deeply imbibed by their youthful readers. They awaken a sense of finer feelings than the commerce of ordinary life inspires.

(91)

Barbauld's observations on the value of novels, published some seventy years after *Grandison*, nevertheless indicate the role fiction was seen to play within the entirety of adolescent and Young Adult cultural and emotional development. Barbauld extols the power of fiction in which she believes '[a] high regard to female honour, generosity, and a spirit of self-sacrifice are strongly inculcated' (91). If Harriet Byron's unhappy but steadfast resolution not to draw *Grandison* away from his first love is viewed in the light of this remark, it is clear that Richardson had a clear purpose in writing *Grandison*, and that it was consistent with the opinions expressed by his great admirer Anna Barbauld, that fiction should provide those 'sentiments of virtue' necessary to be 'deeply imbibed by its youthful readers'. It is interesting that Barbauld's list of authors whose novels have had this desired outcome includes those most often mentioned in the records of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century adolescent and Young Adult reading: beside Richardson she names Fielding, Goldsmith, Smollett's translation of Le Sage's *Gil Blas*, Brooke, Burney, Edgeworth, Inchbald and Radcliffe.

A closer examination of individual characterization in *Sir Charles Grandison* will reveal how intent Richardson was on writing a novel which would provide models of those 'sentiments of virtue'. It is difficult for twenty-first century readers to see in Sir Charles himself anything more than a two dimensional cipher, truly 'the example of a man acting uniformly well through a variety of trying scenes' (I:x), and while it was clearly a desired outcome that Richardson's young audience should thereby emulate his actions 'regulated by one steady principle' (I:x), it is doubtful whether 'a man of religion and virtue...happy in himself, and a blessing to others' (I:x) fully engaged the eighteenth-century adolescent

imagination. Walter Allen expressed a mid-twentieth-century view when he commented that,

[h]e is, in fact, too much of a good thing; he scatters the largesse of his benevolence on all sides, but neither his principles nor his virtues are submitted to any very searching test; he remains always in command of every situation...He is...a devastating prig, the greatest in fiction, and since he is perfect from the beginning, all that action can represent is a series of variations on the theme of goodness.

(1970:51)

In recognizing that Richardson made a significant contribution in the pioneering of the psychological novel, we can see that he used the immediacy of letter-writing to achieve an effect very similar to those *fin de siècle* and early twentieth-century writers such as Henry James, James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf. They, unlike the authors who immediately followed Richardson, eschewed the ability of a writer to maintain a controlling presence and authorial intervention in the action, and instead employed a 'stream of consciousness' method of writing to reveal all the thoughts of the protagonists, the continuous process of their wrestling with solutions to situations and the vacillation involved therein. The feasibility of the timeframe for the action in *Sir Charles Grandison*, has been often questioned. Virginia Woolf's father, the editor and critic Sir Lesley Stephen, calculated that in that novel, the letters which one of the correspondents apparently wrote during three days must have necessitated writing without a break for eight hours a day during that time. Because he uses the epistolary form, Richardson's readers must suspend their perception of normal time in order to accept the world of fiction in which characters commit their every thought, word and deed to paper. In order to treat his subject in the depth he desires, the letters are enormously detailed, and so that he can give readers further commentary from other perspectives, he includes not only the replies, but also opinion on matters therein from other characters, the original letters having been enclosed or copied and sent to third parties. Thus, in the first volume, with Letter XL from Mrs. Selby to Harriet she encloses one from the Countess Dowager of D\_\_\_\_\_ to Mrs. Selby, which forms Letter XLI and in which Harriet is sought as a bride for the Earl of D\_\_\_\_\_. The passage from his Preface to *Clarissa* (1985:35), quoted

earlier in this chapter, describes his technique, and the effect he desires in using it – that the ability to provide continuously ‘instantaneous descriptions and reflections’ in the letters should provide a unique verisimilitude in his novels.

Against the advice of some of his friends, who feared an overlong novel, Richardson was convinced that the inclusion of minutiae, and the coverage of many subplots involving minor characters whose lives nevertheless impinge on those of the major characters, were essential to achieve immediacy in his work. He continues in his Preface,

Much more lively and affecting must be the style of those who write in the height of a *present* distress: the mind tortured by the pangs of uncertainty (the events then hidden in the womb of fate): than the dry, narrative, unanimated style of a person relating difficulties and dangers surmounted, can be...

(35)

In his Preface to *Sir Charles Grandison* Richardson reinforces this assertion, and prepares readers for his final insightful novel into the workings of the human mind:

The nature of familiar letters, written, as it were, to the *moment*, while the heart is agitated by hopes and fears, on events undecided, must lead an excuse for the bulk of a collection of this kind.

(I:xi)

In the Postscript to *Clarissa* he had further declared,

...there was frequently a necessity to be very circumstantial and minute, in order to preserve and maintain that air of probability, which is necessary to be maintained in a story designed to represent real life...

(1499)

This is very like the effect seen in novels which employ a stream of consciousness to create immediacy for readers, and an intimate and instantaneous insight into each character’s wrestling with life’s smallest occurrences. Harriet, writing to Sir Charles’ sister, Charlotte, indicates the confusion she feels after his proposal of marriage,

Richardson conveying this in a series of short, disjointed phrases, and copious exclamations,

Just then came in my Nancy (Why came she in?) with the general expectation of us to breakfast –Breakfast! –What thought I, is breakfast! – The world, my Charlotte! –But hush! – Withdraw, fond heart from my pen!

(VI:132)

Allen considers, with justification,

...it is no more absurd than that of the omniscient first-person narrator in *David Copperfield*, or the assumption that we must make when reading Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* that we are overhearing half a dozen people talking to themselves in interior monologue at key-moments in their lives.

(47)

It is, in fact, very similar to Woolf's technique no more and no less absurd than her convention, the stream of consciousness, and is employed by the author to allow readers to experience the progression of emotions and thoughts which pass through a character's mind at the moment they are formed. Dale Spender (1986), considering the epistolary tradition in general, and its emergence as a genre for women fiction writers in the eighteenth century in particular, finds it a form which particularly explored the psychology of action, because letter writing was the means by which women of the time could express every detail of their most intimate lives. She writes,

The popularity of letters as a published form had many implications for women. Because they had been permitted letter writing, because it was familiar to them... the letter form was particularly suited to the expression of women's experience. Letters were the perfect place for poignant and painful outpourings. The suffering heroine...could...retire and unburden herself in letters or journals.

(96)

She continues by seeing in the epistolary novel the roots of stream of consciousness fiction,

Psychological fiction and stream of consciousness novels might have been a long way off, but the epistolary novel was an excellent vehicle for allowing characters to be

introspective, to examine their circumstances, and to weigh their motives and decisions.

(96)

Spender also draws the comparison with soap opera:

Human beings seem to have a constant need to know what is happening in the lives of other people, and to make sense of it in relation to their own (which explains the popularity of many forms besides fiction – scandal sheets, many newspaper exposés, soap operas – and even ‘gossip’), and one of the most direct means of access to private lives is through personal letters and diaries.

(96)

Although she recognizes the connection between epistolary and stream of consciousness novels, it can be argued that Spender underestimates the similarity of the effect achieved by each, and places too little importance on the direct progression from the earlier to the later style of introspective and psychological writing. Richardson, the letter-writing professional, the intellectual intimate of women throughout his life, recognized the possibilities the epistolary novel would provide in this respect.

We may also agree with Allen when he postulates,

[p]erhaps Sir Charles is the author’s dream-picture of himself, a man of lofty birth, great riches, perfect breeding, endowed with every gift, accomplishment, and virtue, the very embodiment of noblesse oblige – and surrounded always, like his creator, with a chorus of adoring women, from among whom he must choose the one most worthy to be his consort...he is in the end no more convincing than the virtuous in fiction usually are.

(51)

Richardson’s portrayal of Sir Charles permits no development of character, for in it he is, as Allen says, ‘perfect from the beginning’. Unlike Fielding’s eponymous hero Tom Jones, whose physical journeying precipitates that emotional journey which moulds his ultimate good character, or even Richardson’s earlier creation in *Pamela*, Mr. B (whose rakish character becomes reformed during the course of the novel), Sir Charles himself journeys far in person, but scarcely at all in character. He is placed within the novel to

typify a good man and a Christian, the personification of a conduct book exemplar.

Outlining his reading of *Grandison*'s three principal themes, Harris suggests that the hero is there to be:

...a petitioner to God, as a man of moderation, chastity, and charity, as a peace-maker, as a deliverer of his friend in physical or financial danger, the watcher at his death-bed and his executor, as a guardian, master, and expostulator...Sir Charles is also used for the second main theme of filial duty, scenes again being provided that he may act in exemplary fashion.

(xviii)

Richardson uses *Grandison* to represent these desirable characteristics. However Richardson's contemporaries were not unanimous in their admiration for Sir Charles' perfection, and it is interesting to note that one of the adolescent girls in Robert Bage's *Barham Downs* (1784) complains that '[u]niformity in goodness, is uniformity in dullness; and the most uninteresting of all characters that were ever drawn is, I find, the stiff, starched, demure, formal, all-virtuous Sir Charles Grandison' (quoted in Batchelor, 2002). What then might the Young Adult readers of *Grandison* see in its hero?

Richardson, aware of the power of romance among his intended youthful readership, introduces Sir Charles as Harriet's rescuer,

I found my oppressor...pulled out of the chariot, by the brave, the gallant man, (which was done with such force, as made the chariot rock,) and my protector safe; I was near fainting with joy, as before I had been with terror...He carried me in his arms (I could not walk) to his own chariot...he lifted me into his own chariot. He came not in, but shut the chariot door, as soon as he had seated me...Partly through terror, partly through weakness, I had sunk to the bottom of the chariot. He opened the door, entered, and with all the tenderness of a brother, soothed me, and lifted me on to the seat once more...his supporting arm, thrown around me...

(I:246-7)

Here are the ingredients of romance: abduction by a suitor, violence, then salvation, and the implied sexuality of the situation in the intimacy of *Grandison*'s carrying Harriet to the coach, picking her from the floor, and then supporting her with his arm. In Harriet's swooning state she is vulnerable to the actions of her rescuer, and for the adolescent

female reader there exists the titillating threat/delightful frisson of further abuse, this time at the hands of her rescuer. Neither Harriet nor the reader is aware that her rescuer is Grandison, and once his identity is revealed he is placed within the text like the chivalric hero of fairy tale or romance. This offers heady reading for impressionable girls, presenting an image of the hero which outweighs Sir Charles' overpowering worthiness, if only for a while. Similarly, Sir Charles' attendance at the proposed duel with Sir Hargrave, although ultimately emphasizing his moderate nature, again places him as the hero of romance. This characterization remains throughout the novel, Harriet, now married to Sir Charles, writing still in volume seven like the love-struck adolescent of the first volume, '[h]e folded his arms about me, and kissed [a tear] from my cheek...he folded me in his kind arms...he pressed me still to his heart...' (VII:46-7). Nevertheless Richardson carefully reiterates his intended reading of Sir Charles among Harriet's final words in the novel: '[w]hat... is the boasted character of most of those who are called HEROES, to the unostentatious merit of a TRULY GOOD MAN!' (VII:325), and in his 'Concluding Note' defends Sir Charles against those who find him 'too near the faultless character, which critics censure as above nature' (327), protesting that 'Sir Charles Grandison himself is sensible of imperfections, and...accuses himself more than once, of tendencies to pride and passion' (327). Seen through Harriet's adoring Young Adult eyes, there is enough of the matinee idol in Sir Charles to satisfy a young female reader's ideal of romantic hero, a fantasy, an idealized figure whose sexuality is enticing but safely distanced from reality by his two-dimensional unchanging characterization.

Richardson's novel is indeed a *Bildungsroman* for the young women characters in it, and through them, can serve as such for the novel's young female readership. Richardson's depiction of adolescent inconsistencies of mood in his characterization of Harriet and Charlotte has already been discussed earlier in this section. He is an acute observer of female behaviour, *Pamela* and *Clarissa* having already proved his insight into the maturing youthful mind. Why then is *Grandison*, rather than those two earlier, far more sensational novels, the chosen reading of so many eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Young Adult English girls? Perhaps the answer lies in *Grandison*'s very ordinariness which, like the everyday life of the soap opera, is unrealistic in its totality,



but permeated with the minutiae and tedium of real life. It thereby offers points of contact for all those young readers who seek examples upon which to construct their own life and behaviour. Michele Barrett (1982), arguing that feminist criticism often denies the reader's ability to transform what is regarded as unmediated representation in literature and film, considers that skills, though socially defined, are not innate but acquired and therefore improvable and that this also true of the imaginative rendering of social life in literature, a view endorsed with regard specifically to eighteenth-century epistolary fiction by Spender (1986). Spender asserts that 'self-inspection...was becoming a valued activity of middle-class society, and fiction which could deal with self-examination meshed with the growing social awareness that human beings were capable of reflection, change—and improvement' (96). We may perhaps trace this trend back to the seventeenth century, and the spiritual journals of the Puritans in which they recorded their scrutiny of their own feelings and behaviour for indications of whether or not God had judged them worthy to be 'elected' to everlasting glory. Barrett emphasizes the active role of the reader/viewer, and defends the importance in this respect of soap operas and romances, dismissed by many feminist critics for their stereotypically restrictive portrayal of women and domestic situations. While some of Richardson's readers might have to face the predicaments of a Pamela or a Clarissa, teenage rebels thrust by fate into the seamiest side of life, the majority would probably not. Despite the eighteenth-century preoccupation with seduction and social rejection as threats to young women, and the consequent reiteration of these themes in fiction, most girls were more in need of advice and example of behaviour in a far more humdrum existence. Therefore that same ordinariness and everyday tedium, which has caused some adult readers in the intervening centuries to consider *Grandison* a work inferior to those earlier novels, was in fact its attraction for its Young Adult female readership.

In the detailed life described within the letters of *Grandison*, Richardson provided the material sought by some of his young readers, situations and sentiments with which they could empathize, and with the help of which they might better recognize and adapt their own behaviour. Charlotte's mood swings, her rebellion against the restraints of marriage and her eventual reconciliation to marriage and motherhood (happily bearing what she

calls her ‘marmoset’!) have been discussed earlier in this section. While the descriptions of the young, lovesick, Italian Catholic Clementina’s dementia are firmly rooted in the romantic tradition of madness induced by unrequited love, readers could also see in her clinical depression the consequences of the pressures of filial duty, torn between her love for Sir Charles, the demands of another suitor and her religious allegiance. Like Charlotte, she vacillates between one extreme and the other, but Clementina’s is a much deeper malaise, one which threatens her sanity and her life, but which ultimately is resolved in the agreement Sir Charles draws up. In this Clementina achieves all she has wished for, except for Grandison himself, and she has thereby reversed roles, as she has ‘the resignation of parents to the will of their child’ (VII:270). Richardson’s young readers could see Clementina survive, recover, and reconcile herself to her fate, with the possibility being offered that she will eventually feel able to marry her other suitor, the Count of Belvedere. Possibly more directly applicable to their own lives are the accounts of Harriet’s own love for Sir Charles, her romantic adolescent imaginings, and the private thoughts she writes to her intimate friends. In these she indicates that, while in public she cannot show her feelings, and admires Sir Charles’ integrity in returning to Clementina, her love for him continues to grow, and she hangs on any sign of ‘brotherly’ affection he shows her, wishing it were a sign instead of his being attracted to her as a lover. Harriet herself succumbs to the mental pressure brought about by her love, which is not so much unrequited as abandoned in Grandison’s pursuit of the honourable. She becomes ill, but her strength of will, supported by her English Protestant faith (rather than the more demonstrative Italian Catholicism) prevents her falling into the mental frailty which envelopes Clementina. Lady Bradshaigh, Richardson’s constant correspondent and adviser when he was writing *Grandison*, saw the two standing opposed to each other as much in personality as in their love for Sir Charles, attributing to Harriet ‘undisturbed reason’ compared with Clementina’s ‘frantick zeal’.<sup>7</sup>

Harriet’s image of Grandison as a romantic hero, and her passionate Young Adult feelings emerge vividly from the intimate immediacy of the novel’s epistolary form. In volume VI, she worthily asserts that,

Love merely personal, that sort of love which commences between the years of fifteen and twenty; and when the extraordinary *merit* of the object is not the foundation of it; may I believe, and perhaps generally *ought* to, be subdued.  
(18)

Mrs. Shirley also warns that '[y]oung people set out with false notions of happiness; gay, fairy-land imaginations; and when these schemes prove unattainable, sit down in disappointment and dejection' (VII:221). Harriet, of course, at twenty-one is, in her opinion, safely beyond the mistakes that may be made during that dangerous period. Nevertheless, left alone with Sir Charles, she finds herself in the situation that any teenage reader would recognize with fearful anticipation, 'I found my face aglow. I was silent' (VI:123). Asked for 'a confirmation of what I have presumed upon' (123) she writes:

For my life I could not speak: yet wished to be able to speak.  
*If* – If *what*, madam? and he snatched my hand, bowed his face upon it, held it there, not looking up to mine. I could then speak – if thus urged, and by SIR CHARLES GRANDISON – I did not speak my heart – I answer – Sir – I CAN – I DO.

(VI:123-4)

These sentiments which vividly represent the confusion of feelings, the inability adequately to express feelings of love, and embarrassment, challenge Young Adults throughout the centuries. Writing in short, disjointed sentences, Richardson creates a highly dramatic text, almost as if it were a verbatim record of the scene, and thereby captures perfectly the uncertainty of emotion Harriet experiences, the love-sick Young Adult faced at last with her heart's desire. Similarly, when she loses a page of the letter in which she has recounted this episode, she fears that Sir Charles will find it, and writes,

I am undone! Emily is undone! We are all undone! – I am afraid so! – My intolerable carelessness! – I will run away from him! – I cannot look him in the face! ...What shall I do?...All my heart laid open too! – such prattling too...

(VI:33-4)

In the course of the letter Harriet has mentioned the youngest of the Young Adult girls who desire Grandison, Emily Jervois, his ward. Among her distraught ramblings about

the lost page Harriet also laments '[b]ut I am most, most of all concerned for my Emily...Sweet Emily! Now will he never suffer you to live with him' (134). This refers to her revelation in the letter of Emily's infatuation with her guardian, and we may guess that Richardson's characterization would have been as accurate of and recognizable to eighteenth-century adolescents and Young Adults, as it is today. Harriet's feelings for Sir Charles, sometimes noble and serene, sometimes passionate and distraught combine the two extremes of love represented in Clementina's high-minded love for Sir Charles, and Emily's infatuation. However it is Emily's all consuming but unrecognized passion which so clearly speaks to the adolescent or Young Adult reader rather than that of the older Italian woman, Clementina.

We could liken Richardson's portrayal the development of Emily's romantic passion for her guardian to the subtlety of a thriller writer laying the clues which will enable readers to solve a crime. A considerable heiress, but still a minor, she has been placed in Grandison's care on the death of her father. Her mother, on her remarriage, wishes that Emily should be returned to her care, but she has proved herself unsuitable to protect her daughter, and Sir Charles instead looks to Harriet as the young girl's companion. Grandison describes his ward as 'weak hearted' and 'diffident' (III:15), and wishes for a suitable husband for her but fears that 'I am a young man; and as Emily is so well grown for her years, I think I cannot so properly be her introducer to them, as I might, were I fifteen or twenty years older.' (12). Emily is desperate not to be returned to her mother, and it is in her gratitude to Sir Charles for refusing to do so that her infatuation begins. She regards him as her saviour, and his compassion is misconstrued as romantic rather than that of a man acting *in loco parentis*,

He drew her to him...with looks of tenderness; and called her his dear Emily...the *child of his compassion*...His goodness overwhelmed her...she stood before him, endeavouring to overcome her emotion...her hands caught back...and resting for a moment on his shoulders...she looked as much abashed, as if she had *not* checked herself...he arose and took her hand, her face overwhelmed with tears...he took her handkerchief and tenderly wiped her tears.

(109-112)

Bereft both of parents and companions of her own age, Emily considers Harriet, at twenty-one emerged from adolescence to youthful maturity, to be her best friend. She admires her intensely, and easily displaces on to her the love she feels for her guardian, sinking her own unrecognised infatuation in Harriet's growing passion for Sir Charles. Interceding in a discussion with her mother, she stores the kind remarks he makes, beginning to interpret them as signs of a different kind of affection,

My Emily, said he, (I do love he should call me *his* Emily –  
But all the world is *his* Emily I think)...how good this was!  
I could have kissed the hand that gave me the notes, if I  
thought it would not have looked too free...When he came  
in to me, I arose and threw myself at his feet...He raised  
me. He sat down by me: See child (said he, and he took  
my hand: my heart was sensible of the favour and throbbed  
with joy)...

(IV:125-127)

As often as she thinks she sees signs of romantic love in his attentions towards her, she is beset with a teenage girl, doubts, and wonders what she has done to occasion this, as she tells Harriet:

He calls me oftener *child*, madam, than any thing else,  
when we are alone together; and is not quite so free, I think,  
at such times. In his behaviour to me...as when we are in  
company – Why is that? — I am sure I equally respect *him*  
at one time as at another. Do you think, madam, there is  
any thing in the observation? I do love to study him, and to  
find out the meaning of his very looks, as well as words.

(128)

While Grandison is in Italy, the letter she writes to Harriet shows an increasing awareness within her own consciousness that her feelings extend beyond those of a child for her guardian:

O, madam! where is he now? ...What a pleasure, yet what a  
pain is there in sighing, when I think of him! Yet I know I  
am an innocent girl. And this I am sure of, that I wish him  
to be the husband of but one woman in the whole world;  
and that is you. But then my next wish is – You know what

– Ah my Miss Byron! You must let me live with you and my guardian, if you should ever be Lady Grandison.  
(285)

Her emotions are conflicted, on the one hand desiring Grandison for herself, yet realizing deep down that this is impossible, and therefore wanting him to be Harriet's husband, so that she can still maintain an intimacy with him. She both craves and fears a sexual relationship with Grandison, and subsumes her own desire within a passion that *Harriet* should be his. When, however, she learns from Charlotte of Harriet's impending marriage to Sir Charles, she is overcome with confusion and sorrow,

Married, madam! –  
Yes, my love! – And to your guardian, child! –  
To my guardian, madam! – Well but I hope so—  
...The dear girl tried to be joyful, and burst into tears!  
Why weeps my girl? – O fie! are you sorry that Miss Byron will have your guardian? I thought you loved Miss Byron. So I do, madam, as my own self, and more than myself, if possible – But the surprise, madam – Indeed I am glad!—  
What ails me to cry, I wonder! ...I am ashamed of myself...I must have my cry out— And I shall then be all joy and gladness.

(VI:4)

Charlotte is puzzled by the 'April-faced girl', and continues her letter by considering the cause of Emily's reaction to the good news:

Now, Harriet, this emotion of Emily appears to me as a sort of phenomenon. Do *you* account for it as you will, but I am sure Emily is no hypocrite: she has no art: she *believes* what she says, that her sudden burst of tears was owing to her heart being affected by her mother's contrition: and I am also sure she loves you above all the women in the world.

(6)

Although Charlotte is convinced of the sincerity of Emily's assertion that it is her mother's contrition which has affected her so deeply, she suspects that there may be another cause for her tears, unrealised by Emily herself,

Yet it is possible that the subtle thief, ycleped Love, had got very near her heart; and just at the moment threw a dart into one angle of it, which was the something that struck her, all

at once, as she phrased it, and made her find tears as a relief.

(6)

Charlotte has recognized what Emily up until this point has not, that she is in love with her guardian. It is Harriet's announced union with Sir Charles which precipitates Emily's recognition of her own hitherto unacknowledged love for her guardian. When Harriet hears from Charlotte that she suspects Emily's love for Grandison is not that of a ward for her guardian, she understands the complexity of emotions experienced by adolescent girls, and writes:

I hope, for her *own* sake, that the dear girl puts the matter right when she attributes her sudden burst of tears to the weakness of her spirits occasioned by her mother's remorse...could my Emily have any [hopes], were I out of the world?— No, surely: the very wardship, which he executes with so much indulgent goodness to her, would exclude all such hopes...true sisterly pity overwhelmed my heart, when I first read that part of your letter which so pathetically describes her tender woe. Be the occasion her duty, or her love, or owing to a mixture of both. I am charmed with her beautiful simplicity.

(13-14)

Harriet further realizes that the revelation of Emily's feelings for Sir Charles could cause her great embarrassment and even prevent her living with them after Harriet's marriage. She reassures Charlotte, 'I will soothe her! ... I will, by sisterly compassion, entitle myself to all her confidence: she shall have all mine. Nor shall her guardian suspect her— I will be as faithful to her secret...' (133). Once Harriet has married Sir Charles, and Emily is living with them, she writes to her aunt, Mrs Shirley,

I do pity her. Her young heart so *early* to be tied and tormented by the stings of hopeless love! Her eyes just now were fixed for several minutes, so much love in them! on the face of her guardian, that his modest eye fell under them. I will give you, this time, the particulars of a conversation that passed between us; which, at the conclusion, let in a little hope that the dear girl may be happy in time.

(VII:75)

Harriet continues with a description of a conversation in which Emily moves from a shame-faced admission that she still feels more for than ‘filial reverence’ for Grandison to an acknowledgement that in time she might consider marrying ‘[a] man who has passed some years in the company of Sir Charles Grandison, who is beloved by him’ (79).

Harriet comments on Emily looking at her guardian ‘if you were to look with so much earnestness in the face of any other man as you sometimes do ... in that of your guardian, and the man a single one, he would have hope of a wife’ (75). Emily sighs, and Harriet imputes this to the feelings she has about the situation of Clementina, who could have married Grandison but chose instead to respect the wishes of her family and her religion. Emily, however, admits that the sigh was not for Clementina: ‘I believe not’, she says, and when pressed by Harriet ‘For whom then?’ protests,

I don’t know. You must not ask. A habit and nothing  
else...  
But believe me Lady Grandison (hiding her blushing  
face...) I believe if the truth were known—  
She stopt, but continued there her glowing cheek— ...  
I dare not tell you. You will be angry with me.  
(76-77)

Pressed by Harriet she defensively justifies her feelings, although still not admitting their true nature,

Your charming eye is *so* ready to take mine to task... I do  
love my guardian, that’s certain: as I ever did, you know,  
madam: and let me say, before he knew there was such a  
lady in the world as yourself, madam.  
(77)

Emily battles with her feelings, finding it almost impossible to reconcile her love for Sir Charles with her friendship with Harriet. Seeking advice from Dr. Bartlett, an old family friend, and pretending it is for the friend of a friend (a subterfuge obviously as regularly employed then as today) she admits to Harriet that it is in fact ‘my case’. Harriet urges her ‘Trust me, love, with your secret. It shall never without your leave, pass this faithful bosom, if it be a secret that *already* I do not guess at’ (99). Emily admits that she has refused to face the truth, ‘I began to be uneasy with myself; and the more, as I was for hiding myself from myself, as I may say; for I was afraid of looking into my heart’ (99).



She fears that she cannot love Sir Charles as a daughter for fear that her emergent sexual love will overcome her filial love: '*can* I allow myself in loving a married man, the husband of my friend? And sometimes I trembled at the thought...' (101).

The case she puts to Dr. Bartlett is that of acquaintances of the fictitious Anne,

Two young women, one young man, living in one house:  
the young man contracted to one of the young women; the  
other knowing it; and though a person incapable of criminal  
thought, yet finding an increasing regard for the young man,  
though she dearly loved her friend, began to be afraid that  
her heart was not quite as it should be. What, I asked, as for  
my Anne's friend, would he advise in the case?

(102)

The doctor's advice, she confesses to Harriet, was that:

the increasing regard [was] a beginning love. The  
consequence would be that the young woman would in time  
endeavour to supplant her friend; though at present she  
would shudder at the thought. He bid me tell Anne to warn  
her acquaintance against the growing flame.

(102-103)

Emily is reassured by Harriet that having now admitted this aspect of her love for Grandison to herself, and is convinced by her that the basis for all this love was gratitude and admiration for her guardian's kindness to her, and that she will overcome any inappropriate feelings. She agrees 'I have, 'tis true, but just found myself out: I never could have hope of being looked upon in any other light, than as his daughter; and I hope I have made the discovery in time' (104).

In his characterization of Emily, Richardson has depicted the subtle counterpoint of emotions and the resultant confusion experienced in her vulnerable adolescent experience. In all the women characters of this novel we see the extent of Richardson's understanding of the intimate terrors of the female mind, but it is in those of the Young Adults, Harriet and Emily, moving from adolescence to Young Adulthood, that we can best observe the detailed manner in which he constructed the complexities of their emotions and actions. Richardson wrote with a depth of knowledge derived from many

years of experience as the trusted confidant of his extensive female acquaintance, and as a consequence, he constructs them with skill and insight.

#### **4.5 Conclusions: Inlisting the passions...**

In this chapter I have examined the background, the rationale and the execution of the first of two eighteenth-century epistolary novels intended for Young Adults, which they recorded in their reading records, and considered likely contemporary reader response. When Richardson began publication of *Grandison* in 1754 he set out to produce a new form of social instruction for those approaching adulthood, a form no less didactic than the conduct book so familiar to adolescents and Young Adults over the previous centuries, but considerably more approachable and memorable. His purpose, expressed by Smollett as ‘inlisting the passions on the side of virtue’ was, as has been seen, best served by what Bruner describes as ‘[t]he imaginative application of the narrative mode’ (1986, 13) which ‘leads ...to good stories, gripping drama, believable (though not necessarily “true”) historical accounts’ (13).

In the chapter which follows I shall discuss the particular relevance of Fanny Burney’s *Evelina* (1778), to its Young Adult female readership.

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<sup>1</sup> July 5<sup>th</sup> 1753, quoted in T. Moore (1844).

<sup>2</sup> *Histoire de Sir Charles Grandison*, trans. J.G.Monod (1755-56) 7 vols. Göttingen and Leiden: n.p, and *Nouvelles lettres angloises ou Histoire du chevalier Grandisson* (translated Prévost) (1755-56), 8 parts in 4 vols, Amsterdam: n.p.

<sup>3</sup> *Jane Austen's Sir Charles Grandison*, ed. B. C. Southam. (1980) Oxford: Clarendon Press (unpublished in Austen's lifetime). See Appendix 1:288.

<sup>4</sup> Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, 14 September [1804] in Chapman (1955, 87), Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, 15 September [1813] and 11 October 1813 in Chapman (1933:2, 322 and 344).

<sup>5</sup> Diaries such as those of the Grove family (see the Bibliography) provide details of the daughters' reading. The Reading Experience Database 1450-1940 (RED) <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/RED> contains reading records made by Young Adult girls. It is searchable by gender, age (child 0-17, or adult only), socio-economic group, occupation and type of reading, among other criteria. Matthew Grenby, in his essay 'Delightful Instruction? Assessing Children's Use of Educational Books in the Long Eighteenth Century', in Hilton, M. and J. Sheffrin (2009) *Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain: Beliefs, Cultures, Practices*, Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, quotes the evidence of her reading made by 'Charlotte Elizabeth' (Charlotte Tonna), in her *Personal Recollections*, published in 1841 when she was 51. In these she alleges that, as a child, by reading all seven volumes of *Sir Charles Grandison* to her mother she 'acquired a habit particularly mischievous and ensnaring, that of reading mechanically with a total abstraction of mind from what I was about' (2009:189).

<sup>6</sup> Pennington, M. (1808) quoted in Pearson (1999:26).

<sup>7</sup> Letter from Lady Bradshaigh to Richardson, 30 June 1754, quoted in Marks (1986:64).

## Part 2

### Young Adult Girls and their Reading:

#### The texts

## Chapter 5

### ‘Addressed to a Certain Miss Nobody’:

#### Fanny Burney and *Evelina*

##### 5.1 From a Young Adult Girl’s Viewpoint

In this brief chapter, an interlude between my examination of Richardson’s *Sir Charles Grandison* and Radcliffe’s *The Romance of the Forest*, I move from the writing of a man who understood Young Adult female dilemmas to that of a woman who had experienced them. It has been noted in Chapter 4 that the sixteen-year-old Frances Burney recorded in 1768 in her early diary that she was a considerable admirer of Richardson’s *Grandison*, and greatly discomfited to be assured that *Grandison* was ‘too perfect for human nature’. Although *Evelina or A Young Lady’s Entrance into the World* appeared in public for the first time in 1778, when its unidentified author was twenty-six, it was in fact a sequel to an earlier novel, written before Burney was fifteen. She records in two later works that, in a fit of adolescent moral rectitude, she had destroyed all her early writing, ‘to combat this writing passion as illaudable, because fruitless...[I] made over to a bonfire...with the sincere intention to extinguish forever in their ashes [my] scribbling propensity’ (*Evelina*, 2004: vii ‘Preface’).<sup>1</sup> Among the work that she burned was, she says, ‘the History of Caroline Evelyn, the Mother of Evelina’, a work which, despite its relegation to the flames, was so important to her ‘that irresistibly, and almost unconsciously, the whole of *A Young Lady’s Entrance into the World* was pent up in the inventor’s memory, ere a paragraph was committed to paper’ (viii).

The genesis of her first extant novel *Evelina* was, therefore, in that earlier one written in Burney's teenage years. An image of the title page of the first edition is reproduced in Appendix 1:289. The novel reflects not only Fanny's own experience of life growing up in an intellectually aspirational household, but also the cult of the conduct book, the genre which had so considerably influenced Richardson in his writing of *Sir Charles Grandison*. Burney admits in her *Early Diary* to a conversation in which she claims to be writing a conduct book, and it is clear that the behaviour to be recommended to its readers will lampoon the exaggerated politeness advised in some of the books, which sought so to restrain natural reaction and interaction. The action of *Evelina* reveals the shallowness of society's polite manners, which label and classify its members into artificial groupings which relate not to true virtue and generosity of spirit, but to birth, money and influence, and which give rise to intolerance and cruelty.

Burney's father Charles, the son of an itinerant actor and musician, had spent many years in a determined and relentless pursuit of independence and respectability, and had succeeded, becoming a widely respected musician, teacher and researcher into the history of his subject. It appears that Fanny, between the ages of ten, when her mother died, and fifteen, when her father remarried, wrote to assuage the trauma resulting from her mother's death. The *History of Caroline Evelyn* was a product of this self-prescribed cathartic authorship, and the writing of *Evelina* followed in what may well have been an attempt to occupy herself away from her new stepmother, an ambitious woman who, according to Doody was disliked by all her six stepchildren. Doody states that 'all the children of Charles and Esther Burney hated their stepmother. Despite the later careful censorship of diaries and letters, surviving manuscripts testify to enduring detestation' (1988:27). Burney's novel concerns Evelina's search for identity, and is one of the earliest English female *Bildungsromans*, but in *Evelina*'s case, the novel recounts not merely the development of a girl in search of a suitable marriage partner, but also her quest for acknowledgement by her estranged father of his paternity.<sup>2</sup>

In *Caroline Evelyn* Burney had recounted the story of Evelina's mother, a victim of the unscrupulous eighteenth-century marriage market. *Evelina* reiterates her mother's unhappy tale at the outset of her own story. Caroline's father, an English gentleman

who unwisely contracts a marriage with a tavern-maid, dies when his daughter is two and, fearing she will be corrupted by her mother, requests that she should be brought up by Mr. Villars, a clergyman who was formerly her father's tutor. When she is eighteen her mother, now married to a Frenchman, sends for her, and while in Paris she is threatened by her mother with having to enter into a degrading marriage. To escape this, she agrees to marry Sir John Belmont, but he, angered when he is denied an expected legacy, destroys the marriage certificate, and later disowns the child, Evelina. Caroline flees to Mr. Villar's house, where she gives birth to Evelina and dies, entrusting the child into the care of her guardian.

In *Evelina* Burney continues the story, with the girl, now an eighteen-year-old, journeying to London to stay with Villar's friend, Lady Howard. Here she is introduced to 'the World' of the subtitle, not as a fashionable young lady, but as a disinherited girl, ostensibly a bastard. Her grandmother, Madame Duval, arrives and wishes her to return with her to Paris, but, largely through the intervention of Lady Howard and the comical misfortunes which befall her grandmother and her mother's companion, Evelina avoids this fate. Although courted by Sir Clement Willoughby, whom she recognizes to be a rake, she prefers the courteous Lord Orville, but numerous misunderstandings keep them apart, as do the mystery and stigma surrounding Evelina's parentage. Eventually Lord Belmont, who conveniently arrives at Bristol Hot Wells while Evelina is visiting, acknowledges his mistreatment of her mother, accepts his daughter, and she marries Orville.

Evelina's search for identity mirrors that of the adolescent/Young Adult Burney. The author's own *Early Diary*, commenced in the year after the burning of *Caroline Evelyn*, 'Addressed to a Certain Miss Nobody' (1907: v) reflects her wish to unburden herself to another adolescent girl of her innermost thoughts, but recognizes that she has no such confidante. She realizes therefore that it must therefore be to 'Miss Nobody', and that she herself, as an adolescent setting out on her future life, lacks a fully formed identity, and is a 'Miss Nobody'. It is only as a result of her progress through her *Bildungsroman*, that Evelina can attain status, become recognized as a person in her own right, with the position that the reacquisition of a family name offers, and cease to be a 'Miss Nobody'. Like Richardson, Burney realized the power and immediacy which the epistolary form offered her for a dissection of the inner

thoughts and motivation of her Young Adult heroine, a means of recounting the minutiae of Evelina's psychological reasoning and of the social behaviour and events she encounters in her 'Entrance into the World'.

At the outset of the novel, Evelina's identity is denied her, for she cannot call herself Belmont. Therefore she reluctantly resorts to an anagram of her own first name, itself a version of her mother's maiden name, to use as her own surname – Anville.

Evelina, both in name and behaviour, represents the uncertainty and yearning of adolescence and Young Adulthood, a passionate desire to find an identity, a true place in society, in a family, and ultimately in marriage. Newly arrived in London, and writing to her guardian/proto-father Mr. Villars, Evelina signs herself 'Your EVELINA \_\_\_\_\_ I cannot to *you* sign *Anville*, and what other name may I claim?' (26). To those who occupy a position in society, however worthless that may be, Evelina is a 'nobody', as the 'coxcomb' Lovel comments to Orville, 'for a person who is nobody, to give herself such airs' (39) while another of the company equates 'ill bred' with 'ignorant' [*sic*] (39). Visiting the theatre for the first time she considers herself 'alike unknown in the most conspicuous or most private part of the house' (28).

In the process of becoming an adult, Evelina realizes that, however firmly determined she is in her own mind that her identity exists and is there to be proved (as Belmont, not Anville), to the rest of 'the World' she exists only in terms of the established order of society, the artificial hierarchy ordained by those who rule it, who are influential males. She, as a disinherited female, is doubly 'Other', and Burney shows that in eighteenth-century society (and each successive generation of readers will have seen that little has changed), her identity can only be resolved by her recognition among the male dictators of that order. To be female is a great disadvantage, and offers no societal position apart from that obtained through parental or marital alliance with males. There is no advantage to Evelina in the arrival of her grandmother for, being a woman, she can offer no inheritance, no place in 'the World'. Burney emphasizes this by making Madame Duval both unpleasant and a figure of fun, and Evelina herself is 'amazed, frightened and unspeakably shocked' (57) by her. Madame Duval's actions threaten to reduce her granddaughter even further in the ranks of society by apparently wishing to marry her to one of her 'rude and familiar' (235)

relatives (they are vulgar not only because they are parvenu trades-people but because they are socially grasping, mean in spirit, and despicable in behaviour), just as Madame Duval had attempted to do with Evelina's mother. However once Evelina's position in society is established by Sir John Belmont's restoration of his daughter to her familial rights, and by Lord Orville's proposal of marriage, even Madame Duval is empowered as grandmother, and Evelina writes 'she assures me...that I shall be sole heiress of all she is worth, when Lady Orville' (442).

Like Richardson, Burney recognizes the quicksilver vacillations of attitude and intent which the unformed opinions and emotions of adolescence and Young Adulthood engender. In common with Richardson's heroine Harriet Byron, Evelina is an adolescent venturing for the first time into society, a world of artificial manners and expectations, and she too thinks it unlikely that she will want to engage in its reputed pleasures. Writing from Lady Howard's country house, and not yet having seen London for herself, she writes,

They tell me that London is now in full splendour. Two Playhouses are open, -- the Opera House, -- Ranelagh, -- and the Pantheon. You see I have learned all their names. However, pray don't suppose that I make any point of going, for I shall hardly sigh to see them depart without me; though I shall probably never meet with such another opportunity.

(25-26)

However, even at this point she, like Richardson's Harriet, in her post-adolescent inconsistency, is already regretting her probable decision, and we hear an underlying air of martyrdom in the last phrase. A week later, arrived in London, she writes in a very different vein:

This moment arrived. Just going to Drury Lane Theatre. The celebrated Mr. Garrick performs *Ranger*. I am quite in extacy...we have no time to Londonize ourselves... so we are to sit in some obscure place.

(28)

Two days later she is off 'a-shopping...all this morning to buy silks, caps, gauzes, and so forth' (29) and writes 'I have just had my hair dressed. You can't think how oddly my head feels; full of powder and black pins, and a great *cushion* on the top of it. I



believe you would hardly know me' (30), indicating that the 'nobody' is constructing a new existence and, though amazed and still incredulous, is enjoying it.

Nevertheless, Evelina, fresh from the country, finds the ways of 'the World' often baffling, ridiculous, and false. As a result she frequently speaks out of place and is herself ridiculed for it, to the extent that she writes, 'I think there ought to be a book, of the laws and customs *à-la-mode*, presented to all young people upon their first introduction into public company' (92). It was, of course, this genre that Richardson had sought to reinvigorate by writing *Sir Charles Grandison*, a book 'of the laws and customs *à-la-mode*' in novel form. In *Evelina*, Burney in her turn extended the genre for the entertainment and instruction of her readers, particularly adolescents and Young Adults.

Like Richardson's Harriet Byron, Evelina is faced with a number of possible suitors, from among whom she must make an informed choice for a suitable partner in marriage. Although in social and marital terms men were regarded as having power over women, and Evelina's mother is depicted as having suffered because of this, losing her status as wife, her daughter's legitimacy, and her life, both Richardson and Burney depict heroines who learn how to make a wise choice. As Harriet suffers the unwelcome attentions, including abduction, of Sir Hargrave Pollexfen, so Evelina is pursued by Sir Clement Willoughby, (described by her as a 'madman', mischievous', 'odious creature', 'evil genius', and 'persecutor'), whose overblown language and inappropriate behaviour match that of the suitor of Richardson's heroine. These are situations in which an adolescent (and post-adolescent) girl might (indeed might secretly *wish* to) find herself, and through which both Burney and Richardson guide their heroines, to emerge safe and better empowered to avoid such adventures in future, and to seek instead an honourable man. Sir Clement, partly mirroring Sir Hargrave's behaviour, subjects Evelina to an unchaperoned journey in his chariot, purporting to take her home but actually instructing the coachman to prolong the journey, while he presses his suit,

Then again addressing himself to me, 'How often, how assiduously, have I sought an opportunity of speaking to you [alone]. Fortune has now kindly favoured me with one, and permit me' (again seizing my hand) 'permit me to use it in telling you I adore you'... He drew me towards him as he spoke. I was frightened dreadfully ...he passionately kissed my hand. Never, in my whole

life have I been so terrified. I broke forcibly from him... 'If you do not intend to murder me', cried I, 'for mercy's, for pity's sake, let me get out!'... My own folly and pride... had put me in his power... I shall take very particular care never to be again alone with him.

(110-111)

Sir Clement is as persistent as he is impetuous, and we see him at the denouement of Evelina and Orville's relationship, tearing up Orville's letter to Evelina, while 'gnashing his teeth' and trying to prevent her meeting her lover, as 'he caught hold of my gown' (396-7). By contrast, Lord Orville is reserved, cautious, concerned and totally honourable. Discussing Evelina with Sir Clement he says,

...this young lady seems peculiarly situated; she is very young, very inexperienced, yet appears to be left totally to her own direction. She does not, I believe, see the dangers to which she is exposed, and I will own to you, I feel a strong desire to point them out... she has a natural love of virtue, and a mind which might adorn *any* station, however exalted; is such a young lady, Sir Clement, a proper object to trifle with?... she is too young for suspicion, and has an artlessness of disposition that I never saw equalled... She is not, indeed, like most modern young ladies; to be known in half an hour...

(384)

Burney reassures her adolescent and Young Adult readers that, even though the naïve Evelina has made mistakes in her public behaviour which may have encouraged the wrong sort of man in Sir Clement, Lord Orville's attraction to her increases throughout, despite it being almost unnoticed, subtle and at a distance. Therefore in spite of her own modest recognition that her status does not equal his and that she cannot therefore hope to win him, readers are encouraged that this silent adoration may ultimately be converted to an actual alliance, through Evelina's acquisition of an identity, both physically through her father, and psychologically, through her progress as a Young Adult girl, from adolescence towards adult womanhood. Although Orville is very obviously modelled on Grandison's pattern, he is a slightly less perfect, and therefore more rounded, character, if only because he is capable of making misjudgements, with which he can be faced later. His initial summary of Evelina, as 'a poor weak girl' (38) is recalled by Sir Clement when it becomes clear

that Orville seeks to marry her, and in response to this, Orville admits 'It is very true...that I did not, at our first acquaintance, do justice to the merit of Miss Anville' (384). When he finally declares his love, it is in terms so impassioned and unequivocal that it is guaranteed to set the Young Adult female heart racing, silencing any doubts Evelina (and through her, Burney's readers) may have about her suitability for him (and the possibilities for their own future relationships). Evelina, denied afresh her father's name and thereby her identity, tells Orville, '...you...must seek elsewhere' only to be contradicted by words which accept her as she is,

'Never!' cried he warmly; 'my heart is yours, and I swear to you an attachment eternal!...I feel myself more strongly, more invincibly devoted to you than ever!...it shall be the sole study of my life to endeavour to soften your past, -- and guard you from future misfortunes!'  
(408)

Later, to emphasize this, he declares that she has an identity independent from her family name, and that she can 'receive no lustre from family, whatever she may give to it' (423).

## **5.2 Conclusion: an Entrance into the World**

In all her novels, Burney is deeply concerned with the place of women in society, and in *Evelina*, it is the *placing* of a young woman into society for the first time which she examines. Her text, emerging from that teenage novel destroyed at the age of fifteen, speaks directly to the eighteenth-century Young Adult female reader. Like Richardson, she is guiding her through the pitfalls of adolescence and emergent maturity not through some sterile and emotionless conduct book, but through the characters of an example of a far more accessible genre. By doing this Burney recounts the experience of 'A Young Lady' with whom readers can thoroughly identify, and vicariously assist their own 'Entrance into the World'.

Almost thirty years after Richardson's *Grandison* Burney, in *Evelina* advertising her intention in its subtitle '*A Young Lady's Entrance into the World*', was equally convinced that the novel was an ideal means of enlivening the advice necessary to prepare a post-adolescent/Young Adult girl for her future life as an adult woman. Both she and Richardson recognized the advantages of the intimacy and immediacy which were offered to readers by the epistolary format, together with the possibility of

vicariously entering into the action and identifying with the heroine. It is this opportunity for reader involvement in the story which Bruner sees as making it so powerful a tool when he places the narrative mode above the paradigmatic, because 'good stories' alone allow 'sufficient subjunctivity to allow them to be *rewritten* by the reader, rewritten so as to allow play for the reader's imagination' (35). The next chapter will consider how, in the approach to the early years of the nineteenth century, authorial acceptance of the power of narrative above pure didacticism allowed the novel for Young Adult readers to flower, disguising its moral message beneath a mask of exoticism and sensation, before sense outmanoeuvred sensibility.

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<sup>1</sup> In her account of herself in her biography of her father (1832) and the Dedicatory Preface 'to her final novel *The Wanderer* (1814).

## Part 2

### Young Adult Girls and their Reading:

#### The texts

## Chapter 6

### Sense or Sensibility?

### ...Adolescent reading and the new English Romance: the Gothic

‘The business of Romance is, first, to excite the attention; and, secondly, to direct it to some useful, or at least innocent, end...’

Clara Reeve, Preface to *The Old English Baron*, 1777

#### 6.1 The Philosophical and Aesthetic Background

When Clara Reeve wrote in the Preface to *The Old English Baron* that Romance should ‘excite the attention’ and ‘direct it to some useful ...end’, she was conforming both to the earlier, Richardsonian, model, and embracing the emerging interest in the sublime. In order to understand the development of the Gothic novel, and its particular relevance to adolescent and Young Adult females, it is necessary to examine philosophical arguments which occasioned the immense interest in the sublime, and from which developed its ultimate expression, sensibility.

For the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Romantic writer, it was the effect that experience made on the mind through the senses which was crucial, rather than the reality itself. In particular it was the sublime – the paradoxical combination of opposites such as beauty and fear – which dominated the arts. In the pursuit of these heightened emotions

Romantic ideology sought dramatic locations for literary subjects, quite literally awesome and exotic. Edmund Burke, in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1759) established a benchmark for the Romantic concept of sensibility. In section VII, 'Of the SUBLIME', he writes,

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling.

(1990:36)

Burke was not the first to attempt to quantify and explain the whole question of taste, the sublime, the imagination, and those passions which were considered to typify an educated reaction to a variety of aesthetic stimuli. It had already been the subject of several treatises, influenced by the pronouncements reputed to have been made by the Greek philosopher Longinus. This was elaborated upon by late seventeenth-century travellers such as Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury, and John Dennis. They, together with the English literary critic Joseph Addison who had also travelled in the Alps at this time, appreciated the fearful and irregular forms of external nature, and commented in their writings of the horrors and harmony of the experience, expressing a contrast of aesthetic qualities. When the lexicographer Samuel Johnson assembled the material for his *Dictionary* in 1755, he defined the meaning of 'sublime' as of 'high spiritual, moral and intellectual worth', and 'inspiring awe'. It was the paradoxical combination of these elements, the extreme, the horror and the harmony, which formed the basis for Burke's writing, and which was to become a distinguishing feature of Romantic ideology. This dominated art, architecture and literature in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and in particular gave rise to a specific extension, the Gothic.

As Romanticism developed, the ultimate expression of the sublime increasingly became inextricably linked with sensuality and sexuality as much as with sensuousness and religion. These additional themes became elements of the Gothic novel, and this in turn had particular relevance and attraction for the adolescent and Young Adult female readers

of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth century. In the chapters of Part 1, I discussed the psychological, scientific, social and critical arguments for identifying these as specific stages in female development, and in Part 2 Chapter 4, I argued that the parameters of adolescence and Young Adulthood were less clear in the past, as a result of considerable variation in the social class and in the consequent expectations made of girls. What is constant however is that post-pubescent girls inevitably seek knowledge and reassurance about the new sexual state into which they have entered. For those raised in a society which held that sexual knowledge for unmarried women was not only dangerous to their mental and moral condition, but also compromised their future marriageability, this information could best be clandestinely gained through their reading. This was exactly the concern of the children's writer and educationalist Ellenor Fenn when in 1784 she produced *The Female Guardian*, aimed in part at an adolescent and Young Adult female audience. Fenn includes in this work 'Mrs Teachwell's Library for her Young Ladies', the titles chosen according to a strict code,

No books are allowed to be read but such as I provide. My library for the use of the young people is selected with the utmost caution, as a point on which depends the health and purity of their minds.

(1784:9)

She shows great concern that 'utmost caution' be employed in order that only those works which could not harm their mental 'health and purity' should be read.

The 'Young Ladies' she was determined to protect from dangerous reading, however, were probably equally determined to seek it out. The driving factor behind their pursuit of sexually explanatory fiction was their adolescent state. As I discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, it was increasingly through fiction specifically designed for them by writers such as Richardson that correct behaviour, especially with regard to the dangers of sexual provocation, was conveyed to young women.

From the identification of the physical aspects of the senses, and the resulting psychological effect, came the Romantic concept of 'sensibility', which was seen as an exceptionally acute receptivity of the senses generally available only to those of finer



pedigree and education. One of the areas in which sensibility allowed a true appreciation was the sublime, the means by which the heightened emotions engendered by experiencing those elements which Burke had identified in his *Enquiry* could be fully appreciated. Almost from the inception of sensibility as a concept, it became gendered. Although at times it seems to be a masculine virtue (exemplified in Henry Mackenzie's enormously popular novel of 1771, *The Man of Feeling*), it was women, considered to have a greater depth of tender feelings and a greater capacity for imagination, who were identified as the possessors of true sensibility. Nevertheless, as G. J. Barker-Benfield comments in his essay 'Sensibility', 'the theoretical value attributed to the development of women's consciousness was in tension with a paradigm that could also rationalize their subordination on the basis of their finer sensibility' (102). This tension is clearly seen in the novels which adolescent and Young Adult girls were reading, exemplified in heroines from Richardson onwards. It made those novels in which the heroine endured but ultimately overcame the repression of her father, lover or abductor such a desirable read. These texts, with their subliminal undertones of sexual violence, could form a significant part of the female journey towards maturity.

In 1773, Anna Laetitia Aiken (who, as we saw in Chapter 4, thirty years later under her married name of Barbauld, edited the correspondence of Richardson) acknowledged the correlation between fear and pleasure in her essay 'On the Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terror'.<sup>1</sup> She wrote,

The painful sensation immediately arising from a scene of misery, is so much softened and alleviated by the reflex sense of self-approbation on attending virtuous sympathy, that we find, on the whole, a very exquisite and refined pleasure remaining, which makes us desirous of again being witnesses to such scenes, instead of flying from them with disgust and horror.

(Norton, 2000:281)

She admits, however, that 'the apparent delight with which we dwell upon objects of pure terror, where our moral feelings are not in the least concerned, and no passion seems to be excited by the depressing one of fear, is a paradox of the heart, much more difficult of solution' (281). She continues by explaining that this is partly due to insatiable human

curiosity, which keeps us reading ‘the poorest and most insipid narrative’ (282) merely in a desire to find out what happens next. More important, she feels, is the ‘pleasure constantly attached to the excitement of surprise from new and wonderful objects’ (283), with the result that ‘[p]assion and fancy co-operating elevate the soul to its highest pitch; and the pain of terror is lost in amazement’ (283), and she concludes by praising *The Castle of Otranto* for achieving this. Indeed, when, in 1810 Barbauld edited her 50-volume collection of *The British Novelists*, she included the major Gothic novels. In order to illustrate his sister’s prefatory essay, John Aiken contributed a literary exercise in the Gothic style, *Sir Bertrand, a Fragment*. Although he wrote nothing further in the genre, many subsequent authors copied his images.

Poetry was an ideal medium for expressions of sensibility, and women poets were particularly drawn to subjects which evoked the sublime. One of these poets, Helen Maria Williams (who had also made the 1795 English translation of *Paul et Virginie*), was recognized as a prominent poet of sensibility following the success of her *Poems* (1786). Included among this collection was a poem ‘To Sensibility’, which personifies sensibility as female, and in which she writes,

No cold exemption from her pain  
I ever wish'd to know;  
Cheer'd with her transport, I sustain  
Without complaint her woe...  
The restless hopes, and fears that live  
With her, have power to please.

(2004:63)

Her interpretation is clear in its recognition of the necessary association of pain with pleasure for an individual’s response, both as recipient and administrator, but which ‘words can scarce express’ (l. 22). The poem (reproduced in its entirety in endnote 7) praises the influence of sensibility on all aspects of life. It offers the opportunity to transcend indifference and experience empathy, thereby achieving an elevation of the senses, consolation, and an imaginative escape from the mundane world. Williams emphasizes the soothing powers of sensibility, the transports, the ‘value of a tear’ (l. 20), but only in conjunction with the heightened emotions the sublime encourages. She echoes the Gothic masochistic tenet that on the shrine of sensibility the poet must bleed

and the 'restless hopes, and fears that live/ With her [sensitivity], have power to please'  
(1.7-8) – pleasure and pain are indissoluble.

Williams also shows the importance of sensitivity in the appreciation of the sublime in *An Address to Poetry*, which, like sensitivity, she personifies as female,

Wild Poesy, in haunts sublime,  
Delights her lofty note to pour;  
She loves the hanging rock to climb,  
And hear the sweeping torrent roar:  
The little scene of cultur'd space  
But faintly her expanding bosom warms;  
She seeks the daring stroke, the awful charms  
Which Nature's pencil throws on Nature's face.  
(*Julia*, 1790: i:13)

In this poem, originally an epigraph in her novel *Julia* (1790) but later published in her last collection, *Poems on Various Subjects* (1823), she indicates the wide range of possible reactions to views of landscape that sentimental spectators can experience, and emphasizes the 'aweful [*sic*] charms' of Nature. It is dramatic and beautiful, full of Romantic features such as 'hanging rock' and sweeping torrent', but inspires awe in its beholders, a reaction which carries a sense of terror within it as well as admiration. The dramatic landscape which inspired Dennis, Cooper, Addison and Burke to define the influence on the senses of the sublime, rendered more potent by sensitivity, is also an integral part of the Romantic novel, particularly in its Gothic variant (see image in Appendix 1:290). The early eighteenth-century admiration and emulation of the classical landscape, rendered in English landscape gardening and architecture as a neo-classicist vision of rivers, lakes, temples and monuments, gave way to a desire for a wilder environment, considered more likely to produce feelings of the sublime in its viewers. Fuelled by the Rousseauesque ideals of an idyllic pastoral environment in which nature could nurture a far nobler being than that produced by the harmful influence of modern civilization, an artistic re-presentation of the natural landscape evolved. Filled with gloomily wooded crags, the mysterious ruins of castles and abbeys (often newly built as ruins for the discerning landed gentry) now co-existed with the neo-classical in the same landscape, providing inspiration for the writers of numerous terrifying Gothic encounters.

## 6.2 'Novels and stories Original and uncommon'

Horace Walpole, the pioneer of the Gothic novel with *The Castle of Otranto* (1769), was also influential in translating this natural Romantic landscape into a domestic setting. He established 'The Committee of Taste', together with friends with a similar interest in the expression of the sublime in the built environment, and transformed a modest house into Strawberry Hill, the harbinger of Gothic revivalist architecture, a re-imagination of a medieval castle. This, together with a landscape of typically Romantic mystery, was the setting of his novel, and the inspiration for an entire genre.

Walpole, taking his inspiration from his rediscovery of medieval ballads and romances, and claiming its origin to be an account of events in an Italian manuscript found in the parish church of the Canon of Otranto, devised a format which immediately engaged the reading public, and adolescent females in particular. In *The Castle of Otranto* Walpole's mixture of the merciless feudal tyrant, dynastic downfalls (issues of identity) and the confinement and persecution of a vulnerable heroine in a sinister building appealed to girls approaching adulthood, who considered their parents' (at that time effectively their *father's*) influence on their life to be restrictive or even repressive, and their existence to be comparable with that of those miserable heroines. Reading about these heroines, who eventually emerged from their trials with renewed hope of a happy future, offered to young readers a vicarious means of escape from their own perceived physical and intellectual confinement, and encouraged the growing popularity of the Gothic novel and a related but distinct successor, sensation fiction, through the succeeding years.

Clara Reeve, author of what is generally considered to be the second Gothic novel, *The Old English Baron* (1778, published in 1777 as *The Champion of Virtue*), lists *The Castle of Otranto* amongst the reading she discusses in the *Progress of Romance* (1785) as 'of great merit in their kind, and of moral tendency' (vol. ii:54). It appears at the end of a list of novels which draw upon the medieval romance for their inspiration. Reeve sees this as a move away from the contemporary novel of manners, exemplified in Richardson's writing, towards that which appeared to allow more freedom for the imagination, and a more mysterious, earlier world. Nevertheless, in her preface to *The Old English Baron*

she had thought Richardson himself had achieved ‘the business of romance’ which was, ‘first, to excite the attention; and, secondly, to direct it to some useful, or at least innocent, end; Happy the writer who attains both these points, like Richardson!’ (1778:v).

There can be little doubt that Richardson’s influence on both reading choices and writing styles remained considerable. Clara Reeve champions fiction generally and Elizabethan romances in particular, as suitable reading for young people because ‘they speak to all the noblest feelings of the human heart, and excite to such actions as they describe’ (1785:97). Nevertheless it is Richardson of whom she says ‘[l]et the young girls...copy [him], as often as they please’ (138), and she discusses the beneficial effect of his novels at some length. Richardson inspired narratives stylistically designed to engross their readers in the lives of their characters, and which were to influence fiction for young women profoundly through the following century. Maria Edgeworth’s *Belinda* (originally 1801, but revised several times until 1810) followed Richardson’s paradigm, building on his desire to instruct young readers while entertaining them.

In Chapter 5, I examined Fanny Burney’s debt to Richardson in *Evelina* and to this instance might be added Elizabeth Inchbald’s *A Simple Story* (1791), not in epistolary form, but equally aimed at sensibly guiding adolescent and Young Adult girls by means of a lively exposition of society’s expectations, the choices to be made, and the possible mistakes they might make. Inchbald’s novel is even more reminiscent of Richardson’s *Sir Charles Grandison*, as the eighteen-year-old heroine Miss Milner, with her growing love for her guardian Dorriforth (later Lord Elmwood) faces a dilemma similar to that of Richardson’s Emily. With Miss Milner, however, Inchbald extends the role of the heroine, imbuing her with a forcefulness of passion and expression which is reminiscent of the French romances so reviled by Richardson’s contemporaries, and returning to the French romances’ fascination with the erotic and exotic. In a direct quotation from Pope’s poem published in 1717, Miss Milner’s relationship with her guardian is compared by the young beau Lord Frederick with that of Eloise and Abelard, thus emphasizing this connection with a famous French romantic tale of forbidden love (22). Recalling the strand of religious incompatibility which is introduced in *Sir Charles*

*Grandison* in the form of the courtship by Sir Charles, a Protestant, of Lady Clementina, a Roman Catholic, Miss Milner is faced with the dilemma of loving her guardian, who is a Catholic priest and therefore forbidden marriage, with 'all the passion of a mistress, and all the tenderness of a wife' (72). Inchbald defuses the problem by creating a situation by which Dorriforth can honourably relinquish his vows. Although the ensuing marriage proves unpalatable to a girl such as Miss Milner, with an excessive strength of will, the titillation offered Inchbald's readers would in every way have attracted adolescent and Young Adult girls. The second part of the novel returns the text to a more conventional novel of courtship, Miss Milner/Lady Elmwood's daughter Lady Matilda being as dutiful an imbibor of male advice and appropriate texts as her mother was a rebel against masculine sense and sensible choice of reading.

As I have discussed in the first chapter of Part 1, G. Stanley Hall, in his pioneering study of adolescent psychology, explained aspects of behaviour in adolescents and Young Adults which had been recognized for centuries (and are clearly evident in contemporary texts) but which had not been understood. He writes that the result of the ongoing turbulence of emotions which characterizes the physical process of adolescence is that 'youth lives for pleasure', but that 'depressive are almost as characteristic as expansive states of consciousness' (1904:77). Modern psychologists such as Lerner and Steinberg (for example in the second edition of the *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology*, 2004) increasingly recognize the multiplicity of pressures - physiological, psychological and societal - which provoke the adolescent dichotomy of emotions, feelings of dislocation, and the search for identity. This uncertainty and desire to rebel against expectation creates for many adolescents and those immediately post-adolescent a particular interest in the forbidden. The move by writers such as Inchbald to a genre characterized by increasingly eccentric settings and convoluted dilemmas particularly attracted young *women*. Accordingly they gravitated towards the growing number of novels which apparently encouraged the importance of sensibility over sense.

We shall see later in this chapter that suitable reading for children, and particularly for impressionable teenagers, remains the subject of intense debate at our own time. The

reading habits of adolescent/Young Adult women had been the subject of intensive critical, moral and educational scrutiny as far back as 1752, when Charlotte Lennox had published *The Female Quixote*. Lennox wrote of the debilitating effect of romance-reading on the formation of the adolescent/Young Adult character, a viewpoint which Austen considered with irony nearly fifty years later in *Northanger Abbey*.<sup>2</sup> In that work the adolescent/Young Adult Catherine begins to become interested in sensibility as an essential part of the maturing process of a young eighteenth-century woman, learned from reading certain kinds of books, thereby displaying sentimentalism as a pose rather than as a part of natural development. During the eighteenth century, sensibility was seen by many as the appropriate expression of femininity, but in her work Austen attempts to prove it to be a limiting fiction imposed upon women, and open to abuse. Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* had already examined adolescent/Young Adult novel-reading, showing that the motherless heroine Arabella, lacking a role model for virtuous and sensible female behaviour, relies on her reading of the French romance for examples, and that her immature understanding of them results in near fatal consequences.

Doody, in her introduction to the Oxford edition of 1989, and Pearson (1999:203), consider that recent reinterpretation of *The Female Quixote* suggests that Lennox endorses novel reading as an expression of female power, and a rebellion against male domination of female conduct despite the obvious warnings about reading carried within the novel's text. Pearson cites examples in which Arabella's father threatens to confiscate and burn her books (Lennox 1989:55) while her suitor Glanville 'load[s] the Authors of those Books with all the Imprecations his Rage could suggest' (52). Elizabeth Inchbald's *Lady Matilda* is a victim after her mother's death of equally tyrannical treatment by her father Dorriforth/Lord Elmwood, who has developed into 'a hard-hearted tyrant...an example of implacable rigour and injustice' (1988:195). It is this patriarchal domination and the dramatic situations which arise in the second half of the book which link *A Simple Story* with the archetypical Gothic novel. Indeed in naming her second heroine Matilda, Inchbald reminds readers of Walpole's unfortunate character Matilda, who was mistakenly stabbed by her tyrannical father in the novel which established the Gothic genre, *The Castle of Otranto* (1765). The nineteen-year-old

Matthew Lewis was to perpetuate the name in his novel in ‘frantic sensationalist style’ (Baldick, xvii), *The Monk* (1796) which, as I will demonstrate later in this chapter, may well have been available to and read by, young women (from adolescence onwards) in a number of different textual variants. *The Monk* incorporates passages of surprisingly explicit prose, such as in Ambrosio’s dream, where ‘[h]er bosom panted: She twined her arms around him and glewed her lips to him...’ (1995:224).

In *The Old English Baron*, Reeve made a point of domesticating and modernizing the medieval setting, characters and machinery of Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*. She published several subsequent novels and a single important piece of criticism, the dialogue mentioned in the first section of this chapter, on *The Progress of Romance, through Times, Countries, and Manners; with Remarks on the Good and Bad Effects of It, on Them Respectively* (1785). Reeve approved of Walpole’s attempt to combine ‘the ancient Romance and modern Novel’ although she objected to his practice: he had included too much of the marvellous. She believed that the goal of the romance was ‘first, to excite the attention; and secondly, to direct it to some useful, or at least innocent end’ (preface to *The Old English Baron*, 1777/1778:iii). As she also states in the Preface, in her romance she included only ‘a sufficient degree of the marvellous to excite attention; enough of the manners of real life to give an air of probability to the work; and enough of the pathetic to engage the heart on its behalf’ (v). With this intention, not only was Reeve’s novel, ‘the literary offspring of the *Castle of Otranto*, written upon the same plan’ (iii), but also the precursor of Radcliffe’s style of Gothic – the explicably terrible.

Building on the newly established genre of novels addressing issues of adolescent and Young Adult female experience, the Gothic novel owes its particular popularity among the young women frequenting circulating libraries to the increasingly sensational setting and subjects that its many female writers included. The significance of these circulating libraries will be examined later in this chapter. Another major attraction of the genre must lie largely in the presence of a heroine as the principal protagonist, rather than as a subsidiary to a hero, and in the incredible terrors she faces with integrity and ingenuity. The experiences of such a heroine allegorize the unknown terrors of adolescence within



the intrigues of a racy plot, and the heroine's successful passage through these dire situations offers reassurance and an optimistic outcome for adolescent and Young Adult readers. Because of their female perspective, women writers were particularly well equipped to make a significant contribution to this genre, and the work of Ann Radcliffe, perhaps the greatest Gothic novelist of the time, described in her obituary as 'the Shakespeare of Romance writers', and was very popular amongst young female readers.<sup>3</sup> The influence of her output both on those readers and subsequent authors will be discussed later in this chapter. In 1976 Ellen Moers was one of the first to identify the Gothic novel, as written by women, as a literary tradition that arose from women's experiences. Examining the heroines of the novels created between 1789 and 1797 by Radcliffe, Moers states that,

Stability and integrity are indeed the major resources of the Radcliffe heroine; her sensibility and her decorum never falter; and however rapid or perilous her journeys, the *lares* and *penates* of proper English girlhood travel with her. She always manages to pack up her books, her sketching materials, and her lute, no matter how swiftly she is abducted from, say, Venice to the Castle of Udolpho. Locked up in a gloomy, haunted chamber high in a castle tower, Emily "arranged her little library...took out her drawing utensils, and was tranquil enough to be pleased with the thought of sketching the sublime scenes beheld from her windows."

(1976:138)

Such presence of mind, Moers feels, makes the Radcliffean heroine both intellectually and morally superior to her male assailant,

No mean-minded, authoritarian older man (the source of most of Emily's troubles) can be a match for such a young lady. "She opposed his turbulence and indignation," writes Mrs. Radcliffe in a sentence that is my choice for Emily's epitaph, "only by the mild dignity of a superior mind, but the gentle firmness of her conduct served to exasperate still more his resentment, since it compelled him to feel his own inferiority."

(138)

Extending Moers' argument, it could be argued that through such self assurance in the face of unknown terrors, despite an outward appearance to the contrary, such a heroine renders herself impregnable to both the psychological and the physical threats posed by the Gothic. For a later critic, Diane Long Hoeveler, this makes these novels feminist, specifically 'Gothic feminist', primarily because of their conflicted, duplicitous 'victim feminism,' what she defines as 'an ideology of female power through pretended and staged weakness' (1998:7).

Moers distinguishes the heroines created by male and female writers and asserts that '[f]or most of [the]male writers who followed Mrs. Radcliffe...the Gothic heroine was quintessentially a defenseless victim, a weakling, a whimpering, trembling, cowering little piece of propriety whose sufferings are the source of her erotic fascination...'. Even Radcliffe herself portrayed some girls in this way, and showed that, rather than achieving a self-engendered empowerment, they would be saved through the intervention of a strong and honourable man. Women authors embraced the elaboration of the themes of identity, persecution and physical restraint, all familiar to Richardson's readers but extended now within the Gothic pre-romantic settings of mysterious ruins and the pseudo-historical events that have taken place within them. Moers asserts that Gothic novels by women writers were a coded expression of women's fears of entrapment within the domestic and within the female body, most terrifyingly experienced in childbirth, and these underlying concerns were exactly those of the adolescent/Young Adult female readership which so avidly sought sources of reassurance about the likely outcomes of their future lives. Moers' criticism has been revised and extended by more recent theorists, who have continued to interpret the Female Gothic with a psychoanalytical approach. This is a particularly rewarding critical tool with which to examine Gothic novels, as it reveals the parallels between the physical settings and the psychosexual concerns which commonly underlie the texts.

There were other significant changes in the eighteenth century which contributed to the rise of the Gothic genre. Mario Praz, in his introductory essay to *Three Gothic Novels* (1986) asserts that 'about the time of the French revolution there appeared in France a

whole series of infernal novels of the Marquis de Sade, and in England a whole blossoming of Gothic novels' (8). In attempting to explain why 'in the most polite and effeminate of centuries...should people have begun to feel the horrible fascination of dark forests and lugubrious caverns, and cemeteries and thunderstorms?' he suggests that 'the answer is: just because of its feminine character. In no other century was woman such a dominating figure.' (9) He expands this by alleging that 'the very essence of rococo [is] a feminine delicacy' and conflates this delicacy very largely with sensibility, derived from Burke's analysis of 'the sublime', and given earlier poetical expression in works such as Collins' *Ode to Fear* (1746). Collins' torments and fears are closely allied with his pleasures, and he revels in the thrill which melancholy and '[the] haunted cell, /Where gloomy Rape and Murder dwell' can offer him (Antistrophe to the *Ode*, lines 3-4). Praz continues by recognizing that the roots of Gothic imagery lay far further back, and that Walpole and others were drawing upon medieval and Elizabethan literature. His assertion that it was the increasing influence of women which fanned 'the Gothic flame' is confirmed by the frequency with which Gothic titles appear in their reading diaries in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. We see it also in the proliferation of multi-volume novels, serialized tales of terror within ladies' magazines, and short horror stories in that especially Gothic descendant of the chapbook, 'bluebooks' (so called because of their blue covers) or 'shilling shockers'. Praz quotes Sade himself, translating a passage from Sade's *Idée sur les romans* (1800), in which he puts forward the opinion that:

[t]his genre was the inevitable product of the revolutionary shocks with which the whole of Europe resounded. For those who were acquainted with all the ills that are brought upon men by the wicked, the romantic novel was becoming somewhat difficult to write and boring to read...it was necessary to call upon hell for aid in order to arouse interest, and to find in the land of fantasies what was common knowledge from historical observation of man in this iron age.

(14)

Sade's assertion that the French Revolution had a profound effect on European culture generally, can be seen in the widespread popularity of Thomas Carlyle's book on *The*

*French Revolution* (1837), which was read by many an adolescent, and appears on several real and fictional reading lists compiled by adolescent and Young Adult girls.<sup>4</sup> That Carlyle's book was widely read by the young is confirmation not only of the power and immediacy of his style (events are described in the present tense, as though they are happening around the reader), but particularly of the horrid fascination with which English society regarded the events of 1789, and the succeeding 'Reign of Terror' of 1793-94. Sade mentions Ann Radcliffe (whose popularity in young ladies' reading lists was noted earlier in this chapter and will be examined in detail later) as one of those authors who indulge in 'the most horrible unreality' (14). As first characterized by Robert Hume in 'Gothic Versus Romantic' (in *PMLA* 84 (1969):282-290), Radcliffe's output is best as described as consisting of novels of 'terror' rather than 'horror'. Radcliffe's own views on the superiority of terror over horror are expressed in her essay *On the Supernatural in Poetry* (1826). The apparently supernatural occurrences are ultimately explicable, unlike the horror strand of Gothic novels, more often written by and appealing particularly to a male readership. Where the Lewisian Gothic deals in the external imagery of horror, and revels in visible violence in order to engage readers, the Radcliffean model internalizes the terror, the fear of the unknown being its most powerful device. Far from being a post-Freudian concept, the impact of this effect had been recognized in 1791 when William Gilpin wrote of 'sublimation' – the stimulation of the imagination to produce sublime images by the use of vague hints rather than concrete examples.<sup>5</sup>

We are able to see from Coleridge's review of Matthew Gregory Lewis's *The Monk* for the *Critical Review* in February 1797 that some of these works of Gothic horror, and particularly Lewis's sexually explicit, sado-masochistic novel, would have been outlawed for young female readers as 'a poison for youth' because of the 'libidinous minuteness' of its descriptions. Coleridge wrote 'the *Monk* is a romance, which if a parent saw in the hands of a son or daughter, he might reasonably turn pale' (quoted Norton 2000:298) although, as will be seen later in this chapter, the son or daughter may have been familiar with some of the content in bluebook or stage versions. Certainly it would appear that their mothers devoured *The Monk* avidly, as James Gillray shows in his 1802 caricature

*Tales of Wonder* (reproduced in Appendix 1:289), depicting two matrons with rapt and horrified expressions listening to a third reading the book aloud. Gilray dedicates his work with a sly criticism of the sublime, '[t]his attempt to describe the effects of the Sublime and Wonderfull is dedicated to M.G. Lewis Esqr, MP'.

Distinguishing between the two subgenres, Hume considers that:

Terror dependent on suspense or dread is the modus operandi of the novels of Walpole and Radcliffe... *The Castle of Otranto* holds the reader's attention through dread of a series of terrible possibilities... Mrs. Radcliffe's use of dramatic suspension is similar but more sophisticated. She raises vague but unsettling possibilities and leaves them dangling for hundreds of pages.

(282)

He identifies that 'terrible possibilities' characterize this type of Gothic, ever promising, but delaying the delivery of a dreadful event, whereas the subgenre of 'horror' deals in the immediately delivered extremes. He writes of this,

The method of Lewis, Beckford, Mary Shelley, and Maturin is considerably different. Instead of holding the reader's attention through suspense or dread they attack him frontally with events that shock or disturb him. Rather than elaborating possibilities which never materialize, they heap a succession of horrors upon the reader...

(283)

He expands his assessment of 'terror' by looking at its effect on the readers:

Terror-Gothic works on the supposition that a reader who is repelled will close his mind (if not the book) to the sublime feelings which may be realized by the mixture of pleasure and pain induced by fear.

(283)

Hume feels that Radcliffe and Walpole are concerned with tempting their reader onwards, rather than over-frightening them, forcing them to close the book and therefore never to experience those 'sublime feelings' the authors are trying to catalyze. Lewis and his successors, however, consider that their readers will be irrevocably drawn onwards by their involvement with events, however awful they might be. Hume considers that 'Horror-Gothic assumes that if events have psychological consistency, even within

repulsive situations, the reader will find himself involved beyond recall...' (284), and summarises the essential differences between the subgenres to be that,

...the suspense of external circumstance is de-emphasized in favor of increasing psychological concern with moral ambiguity. The horror-Gothic writers postulated the relevance of such psychology to every reader; they wrote for a reader who could say with Goethe that he had never heard of a crime which he could not imagine himself committing.

(290)

This distinction had been upheld in Varma's statement in *The Gothic Flame* (1957, revised 1966), quoted in *The Romantic Chronology* that:

Terror thus creates an intangible atmosphere of spiritual psychic dread, a certain superstitious shudder at the other world. Horror resorts to a cruder presentation of the macabre: by an exact portrayal of the physically horrible and revolting, against a far more terrible background of spiritual gloom and despair. Horror appeals to sheer dread and repulsion, by brooding upon the gloomy and the sinister, and lacerates the nerves by establishing actual cutaneous contact with the supernatural....

(at <http://english.ucsb.edu:591/rchrono/>  
accessed 24/01/2006)

For the adolescent and Young Adult female, it was possibly the titillating suggestion of impending peril rather than the full blooded description which appealed. It could promise the tantalizing thought that such events might await the reader, where a more extreme and horrific text was too far removed from reality to offer such a possibility. The distinction can be judged from the exchange between Catherine Morland and John Thorpe in Austen's satirical Gothic novel *Northanger Abbey* (1818), in which Thorpe responds to Catherine's enquiry about his reading by denying having read *Udolpho*, but stating that 'there has not been a tolerably decent [novel] come out since Tom Jones [*sic*], except The Monk [*sic*]' (2000:27).

As I indicated in the first section of this chapter, the 'Romantic' physical settings of all Gothic fiction can be seen in the changes in private landscape management seen in the

eighteenth century. The Rousseauesque idyll was translated into a carefully composed 'natural' countryside representing the golden age of the classics, bestrewn with temples, often integrated with elements of an earlier fashion for grottoes and hermit's caves, which had been seen as the repository of the solitary, often melancholy, thinker. This neo-Classical landscape had been further inspired by an acquaintance with the real thing: the classical ruins and artwork viewed (and purloined) by the throngs of upwardly-mobile eighteenth-century young gentlemen who made 'The Grand Tour' through Europe to Italy in order to conclude their education. The *Red Books* produced for landowners by Humphry Repton, and the work of other landscape gardeners, portray in elaborate detail the gardens and garden buildings which would have provided a suitable ancient and mysterious backdrop to the action of the Gothic novel. Repton integrated the earlier classical ornaments with romantic structures such as grottoes and fake ruins. A visit to a landscape garden such as Stowe converts the two dimensional images of the late seventeenth neo-classical artists Claude, Poussin and Rosa into reality, and allows a fuller realization of the integration of sundry influences into this literary genre. Elizabeth MacAndrew, in *The Gothic Tradition in Fiction* (1979), describes the Gothic ruin in fiction as '[a] dire and threatening place, it remains more than a dwelling. It starts out as a stone representation of the dark, tortured windings of the eminently civilized, and therefore 'unnatural' vices, ambition and cruelty' (48-9). Anthony Mandal considers that '[i]n Gothic fiction, the ruin represents the antithesis to the Augustan ideal: the triumph of chaos over order, of imagination over rationalism, of nature over man. These paradigmatic aspects establish the ruin as the definitive symbol for the Romantics' acknowledgement of the insignificance of humanity. The approach to the Gothic ruin generally occurs through its lowest point so that the most picturesque, and therefore sublime, view of it can be apprehended' (*Cardiff Corvey: Reading the Romantic Text* 3 (September 1999, online text). Landscape and place are an integral part of Gothic fiction, a textually-bound but visual expression of Romantic ideology, the inspiration for an appreciation of the sublime.

As Mark Madoff identifies in his discussion of the locked room image in this genre, '[i]nside and outside is the Gothic dimension; inside and outside is the line along which

the protagonists move, between experience and innocence, between danger and security, ... between anarchy and civilization, between license and repression' (1989:49). The Gothic ruin represents the exaggeration of the villain's evil to which the heroine is forced to submit, yet is also encouraged to defy. It is a place of testing, whereby the sentimental virtues are investigated, tempered with knowledge, and finally reinstated. Essentially, the ruin embodies a transition, a process in which these characteristics encounter the Sublime and combine with it to be manifested ultimately in the paradigmatic heroism of the sentimental protagonist.

When considering it as the chosen reading of adolescent or Young Adult girls, however, a psychoanalytical interpretation of the Gothic novel reveals even more powerfully the particular resonances of this genre for that readership. Examined in this light, many of the images of the Romantic landscape which form the background of Gothic fiction reveal a highly developed and obvious imagery to describe a vicarious sexual relationship between the reader and the text. The text gives readers obvious images of ravaged heroines between its pages. Far more potent, however, is the imagery of hidden entrances within wooded mounds, and ancient, ivy clad but none the less phallic towers which the heroines explore. Precisely because these are more subtle images, the imagery they hold can be internalized by the reader, individually and privately interpreted in her own way for her need alone. In these novels of Gothic terror, it is in this way the young female adolescent or Young Adult can face the 'terror' of the sexual act.

It could be argued that exactly those Romantic landscapes which might presage fairy tale (a popular genre for adults in the eighteenth century) also investigate the physiological landscape of sex. Through her fearful exploration of the mysterious ruins and hidden spaces, the heroine explores that 'enchanted castle' which is a woman's body. The post-pubescent girl is discovering her hidden and hitherto repressed sexuality. Any assault on an opening - a gate, a door, a room or even a cave - in which she cowers, fearing the worst, can be seen as a metaphorical rape. Radcliffe's image in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) is one of many such metaphoricized descriptions of traumatic sexual awakening,



The gateway before her, leading into the courts, was of gigantic size, and was defended by two round towers, crowned by overhanging turrets, embattled, where, instead of banners, now waved long grass and wild plants, that had taken root among the mouldering stones, and which seemed to sigh, as the breeze rolled past, over the desolation around them.

(1998:227)

The newly discovered and overwhelmingly frightening importance of her sexual organs is represented by the massive size of the entrance to the castle. Their anatomical appearance is mirrored by the physical appearance of the entry, defended by the 'two round towers' overhung by 'long grass and wild plants', which might be seen as the labia masked by pubic hair. Radcliffe continues,

The towers were united by a curtain, pierced and embattled also, below which appeared the pointed arch of an huge portcullis, surmounting the gates: from these, the walls of the ramparts extended to other towers, overlooking the precipice, whose shattered outline, appearing on a gleam, that lingered in the west, told of the ravages of war.

(227)

Emily seems to envisage a previous violation, which has 'pierced' the curtain – the hymen, while the 'shattered outline' of other towers seems to indicate that 'the ravages of war' extend far beyond the damage inflicted by the sexual act itself, and which threaten the fabric of the whole. The moment of violation is vividly imagined:

While Emily gazed with awe upon the scene, footsteps were heard within the gates, and the undrawing of bolts; after which an ancient servant of the castle appeared, forcing back the huge folds of the portal, to admit his lord. As the carriage-wheels rolled heavily under the portcullis, Emily's heart sunk, and she seemed as if she was going into her prison; the gloomy court, into which she passed, served to confirm the idea, and her imagination, ever awake to circumstance, suggested even more terrors, than her reason could justify.

(227-8)

Radcliffe uses words which emphasize the violence of the entry, and the imagery of the phrase 'forcing back the huge folds of the portal' clearly evokes the physical details of

sexual violation. Moreover, in the words 'even more terrors than her reason could justify', Emily associates this deflowering with a loss of sanity, which we might interpret as a confusingly and unconscious desire to move herself towards adulthood and sexual maturity. An equally obvious image can be seen in a later scene, when she,

was alarmed by a strange and loud knocking at her chamberdoor, and then a heavy weight fell against it, that almost burst it open...A kind of instinctive remembrance of her remote situation from the family heightened [her fear]. She looked at the door which led to the staircase, expecting to see it open.... (299)

If we continue the metaphor of the doorway, we can interpret the 'heavy weight' which 'almost burst it open' as a battering ram, and thence to the sexual penetration of a virgin. Equally symbolic is the passage in which she finds 'a thousand vague images of fear floated on her fancy. 'What if some of these ruffians,' said she, 'should find out the private staircase, and in the darkness of night steal into my chamber?' (319). The repeated appearance of bloodstained garments in Radcliffe (as in every other Gothic novel) also recalls the outward signs of loss of virginity. The common theme of the orphaned young woman, (thereby designated a social outsider) may be seen to represent the isolation of the female adolescent and Young Adult, each of whom must discover for herself the truth about sexual maturity. Though personified in the villain of the novel, in fact her most sinister enemy is her own awakening sexuality. The heroine's task is to destroy this beast within, to seek her adult identity, and to dispel those fears of imbalance and insanity. Emily, in fact, having avoided rape, is reunited with her true love 'by the spell of a fairy' (669). She ascends the 'ruined tower' by its winding staircase, sings and plays there until her lover hears her and climbs the stairs. Now however this phallic imagery no longer holds a threat, as this man is no villain. The adolescent or Young Adult reader of *Udolpho* might therefore, having faced the terrors of adulthood, retreat for a time into the prepubescent safety of a desexualized idyll with her imaginary and honourable lover. Potentially for her the 'mysteries' of *Udolpho* – what adult sexuality involved and how to face it – may now have been reassuringly solved.

Particularly vivid images are those which concern the premonitory dream and the projection or displacement of fear, and the spectre or monster representing 'the other'. For art-based visual images allied to this aspect of the action of Gothic novels, the works of Henry Fuseli, a friend of Mary Wollstonecroft, together with those of William Blake, are significant. Fuseli's works, based on his original painting called *The Nightmare* (c1781; see Appendix 3:311), vividly, if enigmatically portray a young woman asleep, surrounded by exactly those subliminal manifestations of the erotic and the exotic which rendered the Gothic novel such compulsive reading for adolescent/Young Adult girls. His original painting, reworked somewhere between 1782 and 1791 in another version, shows a young girl asleep on her back, with an incubus or *mara* squatting on her abdomen while staring at the viewer, a spectral horse's head with white orbs for eyes staring blankly through a dark red curtain, a bed with a pink and yellow coverlet or shawl on it, a wooden dressing table at the girl's feet with jars and a mirror on it, all surrounded by darkness. In his *Dictionary* of 1755, Dr Johnson had defined a nightmare as '*night* and ...*mara*, a spirit that, in the northern mythology. Was related to torment or suffocate sleepers. A morbid oppression in the night, resembling the pressure of weight upon the breast' and it was precisely this that Fuseli showed in his controversial, but influential and frequently plagiarized painting. Fuseli considered that, 'one of the most unexplored regions of art are dreams, and what may be called the personification of sentiment' (Knowles (1831) II:145). On a print of the picture published in 1783, a section of 'Nightmare', a poem by Erasmus Darwin, a friend of Fuseli and grandfather to Charles Darwin, was engraved:

So on his NIGHT MARE through the evening fog  
Flits the squab fiend o'er fen and lake and bog;  
Seeks some love-wildered Maid with sleep oppress'd,  
Alights, and grinning sits upon her breast'  
(quoted in Powell, 1973:58-9)

Darwin included these lines and expanded upon them in his long poem 'The Loves of the Plants' (1789), for which Fuseli provided the frontispiece. Darwin emphasizes the powerlessness of the heroine to act, '[i]n vain to scream with quivering lips she tries...In vain she *wills* to run, fly, swim, walk, creep; The WILL presides not in the bower of SLEEP' (60). Darwin continues, '[o]n her fair bosom sits the Demon-Ape, Erect, and

balances his bloated shape'. The use of the word 'erect' carries with it a sexual suggestion as powerful as Radcliffe's imagery of landscape, and there can be little doubt that the girl in Fuseli's painting is experiencing an imaginary sexual assault. The sleeper is lying on her back, her body spread out on the bed, her hair loose, her clothing clinging provocatively and drawing the eye of the viewer. All this demonstrates her sexual receptiveness – she is compliant in the union which nevertheless is portrayed as a horrific act. Through her dream, the young woman is engaging in an area of experience which fascinated adolescent and Young Adult girls, but which society forbade any 'decent' woman outside marriage. As the subconscious desire evident in this dream reminds the twenty-first-century viewer of Freudian theory, so the inclusion of the horse's head both recalls the horse as an ancient symbol of masculine sexuality, and of the devil. It also predates Jung's assertion that '[j]ust as the nightmare rides on the sleeper, so does the devil, and therefore, it is said that those who have nightmares are ridden by the devil. The devil, like all evil things, represents sexuality' (1944:154). The combination of one female with two male elements in this picture suggests orgiastic references, a theme which occurs in many of Fuseli's overtly pornographic sketches.

In *Gothic Nightmares*, the catalogue of a major exhibition of Gothic fine art at the Tate Gallery in 2006, Martin Myrone (himself quoting Gardiner-Scott, 1997) asserts that 'Fuseli's preoccupation with the intermingling of sex and death, of pain and pleasure, could be said to parallel the Gothic novel in the 'sense of ritualized play, or fantasy, that allows the voyeur-participant to vicariously experience the pleasures of both sadism and masochism' (173). Fuseli's use of the three symbolic figures was not original, nor was the depiction of a sleeper in this posture. It inspired many imitators, especially among the caricaturists. Since it was first exhibited, its interpretation has varied with current thought. Nevertheless its explicit meaning was immediately apparent, and Fuseli's 'blasphemy, lechery and blood' (a description given by his pupil Benjamin Robert Haydon in a lecture in the 1840s) has intrigued and disturbed in equal measure from the day *The Nightmare* was hung in the Royal Academy annual exhibition.

The particular significance of this picture in an examination of female adolescent and Young Adult attraction to the Gothic can also be appreciated if we consider medical research of the period. Dr John Bond, in *An Essay on the Incubus, or Nightmare* (1753) had for the first time ascribed the cause and incidence of nightmares, not merely to lying on one's back, thereby constricting circulation (a medieval diagnosis), but to the onset of menstruation in girls. He gives examples of fifteen- and eighteen-year-old girls who suffered from nightmares, dreamed of someone or something which resulted in 'a difficult respiration, a violent oppression of the breast and a total privation of voluntary motion' (quoted in Powell, 1973:50). One of these young women 'thought that some great heavy Man came to her bedside, and...stretched himself upon her', and the nightly recurrence of this nightmare was only solved by 'a copious eruption of the Menses, which, for that time, remov'd all her complaints' (54-5). Another was 'severely oppressed with the Nightmare, two or three nights before every eruption of the Menses' (55). In this case the solution was marriage and child-bearing. Dreams in Gothic novels express the dark, unconscious depths of the psyche that are repressed by reason. As we have seen, for adolescent and Young Adult girls, these truths too terrible to be comprehended by the conscious mind revolve around their incipient sexuality. In order to prepare to face the reality in person it was helpful to have faced it through the experience of a fictional character with whom a young woman might identify.

### **6.3 'The effects of romance-reading on the weak and ductile mind of youth'<sup>6</sup>**

In Part 1 Chapter 2 I argued that the importance of reception/reader response theory and cultural materialism in any historical study of the reading of Young Adult girls showed the close relationship between these readers and the novels that were read by them and written with that particular audience in mind. In Chapter 3 I showed that from its earliest beginnings, those researching Book History also recognized and emphasized the interaction between readers and their texts, the 'social and cultural conditions governing the production, dissemination and reception of print and texts' (Finkelstein and McCleery 2006:7). Sarah Green's comment, quoted in the heading to this section, testifies to the early recognition of this. While, as we saw in Chapters 4 and 5, these 'social and

cultural conditions' were influential to the development of the mid- to late eighteenth-century novels of writers such as Richardson and Burney, it is with the rise of circulating libraries that Book History theory becomes particularly relevant.

Despite constant admonishments against the use of circulating libraries because of the unsuitable material they contained, from their beginnings in the 1730s they swiftly became both the source and justification for novels written for the female experiencing or just having experienced adolescence. An image of a ticket for Francis Noble's 'Large Circulating Library' in Covent Garden appears in Appendix 2:288. Study of the *Circulating Library Check-List* compiled online by Jacqueline Belanger, Peter Garside and Anthony Mandal of the Cardiff Corvey collection indicates that in 1810 an overwhelming proportion of the material found in catalogues of circulating libraries would fall within the genre of Gothic romance. Sir Anthony Absolute's comment to Mrs Malaprop in Sheridan's play *The Rivals* (1775) illustrates that by the third quarter of the eighteenth century circulating libraries concentrated more on entertainment (novels of a doubtful moral persuasion) than education. He says '[a] circulating library in a town is an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge: it blossoms throughout the year. And depend on it, that they who are so fond of handling the leaves will long for the fruit at last' (Act1, scene 2, 1979:26). In making these comments the opinion of ridiculous figures in the play, Sheridan appears to have sought to debunk this theory. Similarly, almost thirty years later Charles Dibdin parodied the village circulating library in a scene from *Guilty or Not Guilty* (1804) in which a delivery of books is to be made which includes '...*Tales of Terror* to the widow Tremor – *More Ghosts* to the Sexton's daughter...' while '...The taylor's wife has had *Mysterious Warnings*...' (quoted in Norton:272). Gillray's near-contemporary image, *Tales of Wonder* 1802, (Appendix 2:289) also lampooned female popular taste. Certainly such opinions were of no consequence to the young readers, whose taste for the material continued just as insatiably well into the nineteenth century, but it provided a considerable encouragement to those authors who sought a reliable market for their novels.

There can be little doubt that the rise of fiction and the tremendous growth of the reading public after 1770 resulted in a reciprocal relationship between the popularity of circulating libraries and the opportunities they offered to authors, publishers and booksellers for the dissemination of novels. These libraries were commercial undertakings, run for profit. Library catalogues provide evidence of the titles in circulation, and from them it is clear that the rise and fall of Gothic fiction was inextricably linked with those booksellers or publishing houses, like William Lane's Minerva Press, who not only specialized in Gothic romance but also ran a circulating library to supply the increasing readership among women, and especially among *young* women.<sup>7</sup> Because of the prohibitive price of books at this time it became the circulating library's essential role to offer the fashionable titles to the reading public for the much lower cost of a subscription. Even so, at ten shillings or more annually this restricted the library's use to a better-off professional and affluent trading clientele. In January 1806, at the age of eighteen, the Young Adult Mary Russell Mitford certainly made good use of her subscription, noting the titles of 22 books, comprising 55 volumes, read in 31 days (1870, i:30). Many of these were Gothic novels, including titles by Radcliffe.

The artisanal classes accessed fiction through the smaller, and therefore cheaper, chapbook publications. Lurid in both title and illustration, they compressed within their 24-72 pages all the horrors, swooning heroines and remarkable events to be found in the multivolume sets of Radcliffe and her fellow authors. Designed to be popular and ephemeral, few Gothic chapbooks have survived, and, probably fearing parental disapprobation, young diarists were reluctant to record having read them. As Potter (2005) notes, the Gothic bluebook trade comprised several large publishing houses in London including Dean & Munday, J. Roe, Ann Lemoine, and Thomas Tegg. They were often more book dealers rather than publishers, and produced a wide variety of different books, with Gothic bluebooks comprising only a small amount. He states that, smaller publishers such as Simon Fisher, John Arliss, Robert Harrild and Thomas Hughes, Hodgson, J. Lee and numerous others whose primary commodity was the bluebook, shared the field with the larger publishers, producing around a thousand volumes in the Gothic chapbook and bluebook trade between 1800 and 1825.

Local county record offices, such as that in Norwich, contain many catalogues of the circulating libraries, and these record the high proportion of novels, and Gothic novels in particular, in the stock. Thomas Wilson, in *The Use of Circulating Libraries Considered: with instructions for opening and conducting a circulating library either on a large or small plan* (1797), recommends that a library should contain 1500 volumes of which 1050 should be novels and a further 130 romances, amounting to 80% of the stock. He justifies the proportions thus: 'NOVELS in general bear a great resemblance to truth; most of those produced of late years, convey instruction with delight – have a tendency to improve the morals of the age, and are the most pleasing of our literary works' (quoted in Scott, 2005). Montague Summers, reiterated by Milbank (2005), in his 1938 history of the Gothic novel, *The Gothic Quest*, states that there were also small, cheaper, circulating libraries, to which upper servants and those of similar income could subscribe, while bluebooks, the 'shorter versions of the sixpenny and shilling romances [which were] bought by more prosperous readers', were available, and in great demand, from street vendors. Alison Milbank asserts that bluebook marginalia indicates masculine ownership. Summers' evidence is partly based on the fact that, according to his biographer, Thomas Medwin, referenced in Norton (2000:355-357), Percy Bysshe Shelley obtained chapbooks (bluebooks) at a 'low' circulating library.

William Booth's Circulating Library in Norwich carried 'pamphlets' including *Raymond and Agnes, a Romance*, *The Black Castle or The Spectre of the Forest*, *Gothic Stories* and *Kilverstone Castle* which were available for 1d. per night. In 1817 the catalogue of William Fish's Circulating Library in Norwich listed a total of 362 novels, with basic information to aid the customers' choice, representing about 28% of known novels published between 1800 and the catalogue's date of 1817, and taking up 30 of the catalogues 47 pages. He displayed Gothic bluebooks prominently under the heading Novel and Romances. These included a large proportion of unattributed Gothic titles



such as *The Secret Oath: or, Blood-stained Dagger, a Romance* (1802). This title was a 72 page bluebook heavily plagiarised from *The Monk*. He also lists *The Veiled Picture, or Mysteries of Gorgona, a romance of the 16th century*, an adaptation of Mrs. Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, which was advertised as two volumes. Both novels and bluebooks were available to non-subscribers for 1d. per night. Reading a volume of Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* might take several nights, but reading an abridged version would take only a few hours. Almost all of the hundreds of chapbooks or bluebooks published during the period were pirated abridgments of full-length Gothic novels.

As her online article, a result of her research into bluebooks, Angela Koch (2002) is convinced that, rather than being a degenerate form, '[t]he contents of three-decker Gothics and bluebooks are more or less identical, [and] it becomes apparent that both modes of fiction must have aimed at similar expectations from their readership, with the only difference that the triple-deckers were produced for the circulating libraries and some well-to-do buyers ...whereas the bluebooks were printed for private purchase at either sixpence or one shilling exclusively'. It is clear however from Koch's comparison of bluebooks derived from three-decker Gothic novels, and Frank's list of works based on *The Monk* in particular (in '*The Monk: A Bicentenary Bibliography*', 1997), that there was a considerable market in the recycling of salacious and sensational episodes extracted from the more pornographic Gothic novels. Book clubs and subscription libraries served similar purposes, but as the purchases of the former were decided by the participants, they reflected their tastes more closely. At the age of eleven Charlotte Smith joined a circulating library, and attests to the 'trash it contained' (1795, II:104). These books would often be sold off at the end of the year to provide funds for the purchase of the next year's fashionable fiction. The subscription libraries, however, were administered by committees, and the resulting collections, intended as permanent stocks, are therefore less indicative of popular taste.

The eighteen-year-old Harriet Grove, whose record of reading *Sir Charles Grandison* was noted in Chapter 4, offers in her Diary a snapshot of the tastes of a family Book

Club. An avid Young Adult girl reader, she shared with her siblings the luxury of a regular box of novels sent to their home on the Wiltshire/Dorset border. On February 24<sup>th</sup> 1810 she writes in her Diary, '[t]he Box of Novels came in the Evening & we all began reading them' (70). In the years that her diary covers, 1809-10, she notes not only works by Richardson, Fielding, and Sterne, but many lesser novels, and a preponderance of popular Gothic romances. On June 10<sup>th</sup> 1809 she records reading *The Novice of St. Dominick* (1805), a sentimental domestic Gothic novel by Lady Sydney Morgan, an Irish author, writing as Miss Sydney Owenson. In the following year, April 3<sup>rd</sup> finds her older sister Charlotte reading her *Raymond and Agnes*, probably a pirated bluebook version, or stage adaptation by Charles Farley in 1797 of *The Monk* (1796). By 1797 the Raymond and Agnes episode in Lewis original novel had become a ballet pantomime and a grand ballet, as well as a two act play. In 1798 it also appeared as *The Castle of Lindenberg; or, The history of Raymond and Agnes; with the story of the bleeding nun: and the method by which the Wandering Jew quieted the nun's troubled spirit*, with Lewis credited as author on the title page. We do not know which version of the work Harriet read. Although, as I discussed earlier in this chapter, Lewis' work was of the 'horror' rather than the 'terror' branch of Gothic, his knowledge of the taste of an adolescent audience would have been first hand, as he was nineteen when he wrote the novel. On October 17<sup>th</sup>, Harriet writes, 'we went on with the Children of the Abbey [*sic*]' (88), reading which also occupied them on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>. This is a reference to Regina Maria Roche's novel (1796), one of the period's most popular novels, a sentimental Gothic romance which Jane Austen described in *Emma* (1815) as one of Harriet Smith's favourite books. It is clear from these entries that Harriet Grove and her siblings were also sharing their boxes of books with friends. Although Harriet rarely records any more about the individual books than 'I like it very much' (73 et al), it was obviously a frequent evening entertainment to read these novels to each other.

Charlotte Grove, older than Harriet, but still a Young Adult girl within its extended definition to young unmarried women, also kept a diary. This continues into 1811 with an entry which indicates that 'Harriet and I sent the box of books to London' (100) presumably being returned in exchange for a new selection, which on February 4<sup>th</sup> 'came

from Town' (101). Amongst these was Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), which Charlotte began on April 27<sup>th</sup>, though whether she finished before she comments that ' [we] amused ourselves in packing up the box of books' (105) on May 6<sup>th</sup> we are not told. By June 18<sup>th</sup> of the following year Charlotte is reading *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) to her family, just a year after its publication, 'one of the best novels' (116). Charlotte was to go on to read *Persuasion* (1817) in January 1818, less than a month after its publication, indicating that 'we liked it very much' (136). However there is no record that *Northanger Abbey*, Austen's ironic view on the Gothic novel, which was published posthumously at the same time as *Persuasion*, featured in their later reading. The books enjoyed by the heroine of that novel, Catherine Morland, and by Emma Woodhouse (in Austen's *Emma*, published in 1815) themselves offer an interesting perspective on adolescent female reading, and, together with some of her juvenilia, an insight into Austen's own girlhood reading, in the early years of the nineteenth century.

In *Northanger Abbey* Austen identifies the exchange of views on the novels they are reading as an integral part of female adolescent/Young Adult bonding, essential to the formation of an undying friendship. With the ironic tone typical of this novel, she considers it an unimpeachable signifier of what we would now call adolescence and Young Adulthood, charting the friendship of Catherine and Isabella through 'call[ing] each other by their Christian name', 'pinning up each other's train for the dance' to 'read novels together' when 'a rainy morning deprived them of other enjoyments' (2000:19). To emphasize this Austen records a conversation which is 'a specimen of their... delicacy, discretion, originality of thought, and literary taste' (20) as her heroines commence their critique of the various 'horrid novels' they have already read or wish to embark upon. Isabella speaks first:

'Have you gone on with Udolpho?'

'Yes, I have been reading it ever since I woke; and I am got to the black veil.'

'Are you, indeed? How delightful! Oh! I would not tell you what is behind the black veil for the world! Are not you wild to know?'

‘Oh! Yes, quite; what can it be? But do not tell me — I would not be told upon any account. I know it must be a skeleton, I am sure it is Laurentina’s skeleton. Oh! I am delighted with the book! I should like to spend my whole life in reading it. I assure you, if it had not been to meet you, I would not have come away from it for all the world.’

‘Dear creature! How much I am obliged to you; and when you have finished Udolpho, we will read the Italian together; and I have made out a list of ten or twelve more of the same kind for you.’

Have you, indeed! How glad I am! What are they all?’

(21)

Isabella then names her choice selection of novels, while her final comments about her friend ‘a Miss Andrews’ reveal the shallowness of her friendship and the superficial nature of her conversation, subject matter typically of concern to adolescents and Young Adults:

‘I will read you their names directly; here they are, in my pocketbook. Castle of Wolfenbach, Clermont, Mysterious Warnings, Necromancer of the Black Forest, Midnight Bell, Orphan of the Rhine, and Horrid Mysteries. Those will last us some time.’

‘Yes, pretty well; but are they all horrid, are you sure they are all horrid?’

‘Yes, quite sure; for a particular friend of mine, a Miss Andrews, a sweet girl, one of the sweetest creatures in the world, has read every one of them.’<sup>8</sup>

(21)

It is also apparent from some of Jane Austen's juvenilia (short pieces for family consumption written between 1790 and 1792) that her own reading at that time included Gothic fiction, and it seems that she enjoyed it to such an extent that it influenced plots and characters in her own writing, both in her teenage years (specifically 15-17 years old, and a Young Adult) and as an adult. Her parody of Goldsmith's *History of England* (1764), similarly titled and written in 1791 when she was sixteen, includes two references to a central character from Charlotte Smith's first novel *Emmeline, or the Orphan of the Castle* (1788). Writing of Queen Elizabeth I, Austen makes this comparison:

Though of a different profession, and shining in a different Sphere of Life, yet equally conspicuous in the Character of an *Earl*, as Drake was in that of a *Sailor*, was Robert Devereux Lord Essex. This unfortunate young Man was not unlike in Character to that equally unfortunate one *Frederic Delamere*. The simile may be carried still farther, & Elizabeth the torment of Essex may be compared to the Emmeline of Delamere.

(1978:76)

Again, in *Love and Freindship* [sic], a novel by the Young Adult Austen, which I have already considered in connection with Richardson and the epistolary genre, one young man is rejected because the girls 'were convinced he had no soul, that he had never read the Sorrows of Werter, & that his Hair bore not the slightest resemblance to Auburn ....' (1978:19). By contrast Delamere (the hero of Smith's *Emmeline*) has read and admired the novel, recommending it to the heroine that she may see '... the danger of trifling with violent and incurable passions'.<sup>9</sup> Austen returned to this the theme as a mature writer in *Emma* (1815) when Harriet Smith judges Mr Martin by his willingness to take up novel reading, and thereby align himself with the sensibilities of young women: 'And I know he has read the Vicar of Wakefield [sic]. He never read the Romance of the Forest [sic], nor The Children of the Abbey [sic]. He had never heard of such books before I mentioned them, but he is determined to get them now as soon as ever he can.' (2003:29).

These are clear indications that the sixteen-year-old Austen was intimately familiar with the text of *Emmeline*. As has been seen, Austen also used novel-reading as the yardstick of an aspiration to true sensibility in both *Northanger Abbey* and *Emma*. She makes reference to Charlotte Smith's novels in another very early work, *Catharine, or The Bower* (1792) where there is a scene between the heroine and her shallow new friend Camilla Stanley, who 'professed a love of books without reading.':

'You have read Mrs Smith's novels, I suppose!' said she to her companion--. 'Oh! Yes,' replied the other, 'and I am quite delighted with them--They are the sweetest things in the world--' 'And which do you prefer of them?' 'Oh! dear, I think there is no comparison between them--*Emmeline* is so *much* better than any of the others--' 'Many people think so, I know; but there does not appear so great a disproportion in their merits to *me*; do you think it is better written?' 'Oh! I

do not know anything about *that*--but it is better in *every thing*--Besides, *Ethelinde* is so long--"That is a very common objection I believe," said Kitty, "But for my own part, if a book is well written, I always find it too short." "So do I, only I get tired of it before it is finished." "But did not you find the story of *Ethelinde* very interesting? And the descriptions of Grasmere, are not they beautiful?" "Oh! I missed them all, because I was in such a hurry to know the end of it"--.

(2005:65-6)

This is a clear precursor to the conversation between Catherine Morland and Isabella Thorpe quoted above, 'sweet' being as inappropriate a word to describe a Gothic novel as it is for an avid reader of the genre. That this earlier Catharine and Camilla are as shallow in their literary appreciation as Catherine and Isabella can be judged in the contradictory comments about *Ethelinde*'s length and contents. It is interesting to note that it is the description of the wild, mountainous Lakeland landscape which is particularly noted in Smith's second novel. Written in 1789, *Ethelinde* itself includes a scene between the heroine and Carinthia Ludford which centres on novel reading. In this Carinthia replies to Ethelinde's view that 'Novels are certainly very entertaining' with her assessment of why this is so, '...the thing I like is to be carried out of myself by a fiction quite out of common life, and to get among scenes and people of another world.' However she feels that 'the only fault I find with some of the latest is that they are too probable, and I fancy myself reading what is true.'<sup>10</sup> The wild and exotic settings of many Gothic novels would seem admirably to fulfil Carinthia's needs.

In her article 'Northanger Abbey: Jane Austen and Charlotte Smith' (1970) Anne Henry Ehrenpries comments that Catharine is a sensible heroine – in the modern use of the term – and that the seventeen-year-old Young Adult Jane Austen '... share[d] the sensible Catharine's relatively favourable judgement of *Ethelinde*'. It was not only the empty-headed, shallow young women created by Austen and Smith in their novels who read Gothic texts. The importance of novel reading in the lives of thoughtful, intelligent, adolescent girls, and their particular penchant for the Gothic Romance, is incontrovertibly evidenced in the comments of Smith and Austen. It was for exactly this market that

Charlotte Smith herself, together with a legion of other writers, produced the hundreds of Gothic novels recorded in the lists of publishers, booksellers and libraries of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By the time Austen revised *Susan* (the original unpublished 1798-9 version of *Northanger Abbey*) Ann Radcliffe's novels had overtaken Charlotte Smith's, both in their Gothic extremes and in their popularity. It was the desire to select a novel both critically worthy and truly emblematic of popular fiction (for in a passage of conversation between Catherine Morland and John Thorpe she shows that even young men read Radcliffe), that influenced Austen's choice of Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) as the object of her satire on that genre in *Northanger Abbey*.

#### **6.4 'Terror expands the soul':<sup>11</sup>**

##### **An Examination of *The Romance of the Forest***

Two recent definitions of young adult fiction, by Agnew and Nimons (2001) and McCallum (2006), were quoted in Chapter 4. They separately identify the characteristics of the genre in modern novels, and consider them to be those concerned with 'romance, relationships and the difficulties of family life' and 'subjectivity, especially the development of notions of selfhood, relationships between self and others and between individuals and society'. I have shown earlier in this chapter that Gothic Romances were the preferred reading of many late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Young Adult female readers. My choice of Ann Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* (1791, the title page reproduced in Appendix 1:290) in preference to her later, better known *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, is made in order to unpick those elements of Radcliffe's earlier work which particularly address young women's concerns. By examining *The Romance* I aim to show that it was 'romance, relationships and the difficulties of family life' which particularly attracted this group of readers. It may also be recalled that in Chapter 4 Charlotte Smith, the author of the Gothic romances which comprised Austen's favourite teenage reading, was cited as the source of good advice for the reading and education of young women. In her essays of advice, *Rural Walks: in Dialogues intended for the use of young persons* (1795), she emphasizes that novels were of immense importance to young women's reading, and that they should therefore aim to inform and instruct. Her fiction

output included influential Gothic Romances, which we may assume were aimed at that very audience.

It seems likely that Ann Radcliffe had a similarly exalted purpose in writing her Gothic romances. Her writing was influenced by Edmund Burke's argument in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), and her essay 'On the Supernatural in Poetry' (originally intended as part of the preface to her posthumously published novel, *Gaston de Blondville*, but also published in the *New Monthly Magazine* in 1826) carefully makes the distinction between terror and horror:

Terror and Horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes and nearly annihilates them. I apprehend, that neither Shakespeare nor Milton by their fictions, nor Mr. Burke by his reasoning, anywhere looked to positive horror as a source of the sublime, though they all agree that terror is a very high one.

(1826:151)

As noted earlier, this distinction between frightening but explicable events (terror) and the inexplicable and supernatural (horror) marks an important distinction between the reading tastes, and the works written for, female and male audiences. Radcliffe had been convinced that it is terror, not horror, which is a source of the sublime. She also employs another of Burke's identified agents of increasing philosophical response – the grandeur of the landscape – with considerable skill. Radcliffe frequently places those moments of greatest terror in landscapes of great rugged beauty, thereby heightening the emotions. The experience of terror sublimely awakens the soul to its power, while the landscape inspires awe not only itself but in the omnipresence of the Almighty. Radcliffe's purpose in writing her novels is, therefore, distinctly didactic, the Gothic genre proving ideal not only to encourage true sensibility in her readers but also to display those characteristics identified by Agnew, Nimon and McCallum as typical identifiers of literature written for young adults.

*The Romance of the Forest*, Radcliffe's second novel, is set in seventeenth-century France, within a Roman Catholic Europe perceived by the late eighteenth century to be



typified by violent passions and extreme oppression. The heroine is Adeline St Pierre, ‘a beautiful girl, who appeared to be about eighteen’ (5). At the age of seven, when her mother dies, she is left by her father in a convent, in which she finds only she is ‘[e]xcluded from the cheerful intercourse of society – from the pleasant view of nature – almost from the light of day – condemned to silence – rigid formality – abstinence and penance – condemned to forgo the delights of the world’ (37). When her father listens to her pleas to leave, she finds herself taken to a miserable house, locked into her room, and then taken by ‘ruffians’ who insist she should be taken away by a chance visitor, Monsieur La Motte. La Motte and his wife are fleeing Paris to escape debt, and they, together with the distraught Adeline, take refuge in a ruined abbey in the south east of the country. Here, in concealed rooms, Adeline discovers sinister relics of a terrible past deed, a skeleton, a manuscript account of that unfortunate person’s imprisonment in the room, and a rusty dagger. The abbey’s owner, the Marquis de Montalt, returning unexpectedly, becomes besotted with her, and attempts to seduce her. We later discover that he is in fact her uncle, and that he murdered his half brother, her father, in order to gain his fortune and title. At that time, the Marquis had placed his infant niece with another family. Adeline took this family to be her natural parents, but the death of her ‘mother’ had occasioned her removal to a convent. Adeline’s determination to leave that convent had prompted the Marquis to give orders she should be killed for fear his crime should come to light, but instead one of his men had taken pity on her, and sent her away with La Motte.

During her time at the Abbey, Adeline meets Louis, La Motte’s son, and Theodore Peyrou, one of the Marquis’ military company, both of whom are attracted to her. Fleeing from the Marquis’ attentions, Adeline is aided by Theodore, who is captured when he fights the Marquis. When she is returned to La Motte’s protection, the Marquis threatens La Motte that unless he poisons Adeline he will hand him over to face his debts, and the theft of jewels which he had earlier made from the Marquis, but La Motte allows her to escape, in the care of his servant. The Marquis then causes La Motte to be arrested and imprisoned. Adeline and the servant reach a village near Nice, where Adeline lives with the family of M. La Luc, a pious, generous and gentle Protestant clergyman. She

eventually discovers that he is the father of Theodore. Evidence emerges of the Marquis' past crimes, and La Motte and Theodore are released, Adeline's true parentage is revealed at the Marquis' trial, and Adeline marries Theodore La Luc.

When, in 1818, Jane Austen included *The Romance of the Forest* among the preferred reading matter of her heroine Emma, she was reflecting its great continuing popularity among adolescent and Young Adult girls. In its first full year of publication, the twenty-five-year-old Maria Edgeworth wrote to her cousin Sophy Ruxton on August 14<sup>th</sup> 1792,

...the Romance of the Forest [*sic*]...has been the fashionable novel here, everybody read and talked of it; we were much interested in some parts of it. It is something in the style of the Castle of Otranto [*sic*], and the horrible parts we thought well worked up, but it is very difficult to keep Horror breathless with his mouth open through three volumes.

(Norton:340)

From Austen's reference, it is clearly just as popular twenty-six years later, and many of its themes of female experience, so relevant to its adolescent and Young Adult female readers, were to reappear in the mid-nineteenth century transformed into the novel of sensation. By then the difficulty which Edgeworth had identified, of 'keeping Horror breathless with his mouth open through three volumes', had resulted in the substitution of crime and mystery for horror. An examination of this development will form the subject matter of the next chapter.

We have seen that the key identifiers of fiction for young adults were defined by Agnew and Nimons as 'romance, relationships, and the difficulties of family life', and 'a teenage identity which differs from that of either adulthood or childhood...' (775). McCallum sees 'a common pre-occupation with subjectivity, especially the development of notions of selfhood, relationships between self and others and between individuals and society' (4:217). These are all seen to underpin the text of *The Romance of the Forest*. An even more recent discussion by Brian Alderson of the essential elements which distinguish young adult fiction identifies 'social awareness' as a key factor. Alderson quotes a condemnation in 1978, by Graham Hammond, of the work of an unidentified mid-

twentieth-century writer for young adults, which criticises it because 'plot, character and situation are manipulated for predetermined instructional ends' (Butts & Garrett, 2006:208-9). This can be seen as a key element of Radcliffe's work, as it was, more overtly, of Richardson's *Grandison*.

The themes of 'romance, relationships and the difficulties of family life' pervade Radcliffe's text. It is the difficulty of Adeline's family life which places her in the predicament from which La Motte rescues her, and which dictates her social and sexual vulnerability. Adeline recounts her early life in a passage which emphasizes her isolation and unhappiness,

I am the only child...of Louis de St. Pierre...of small fortune... Of my mother I have a faint remembrance: I lost her when I was only seven years old, and this was my first misfortune. At her death my father...boarded me in a convent. Thus was I, at this early period of my life, abandoned to strangers.

(35-6)

The man she believes to be her father, on his infrequent visits, brings her no affection or consolation, for 'on these occasions, which wrung my heart with grief, he appeared unmoved, so that I often thought he had little tenderness for me' (36). Her entreaties to return home have no effect, and at the very point where she enters puberty, she is removed from that convent and placed in another, where 'I learned my father intended I should take the veil'. Instead of realizing the promise of forthcoming self-awareness, sexual maturity and the possibility of a future in which a loving relationship will recompense her loveless family life, she is condemned to a life about which she feels horror and disgust at the prospect of being 'immured in the walls of the cloister' (36), which she perceives to be as bereft of love as her early years. In the use of the description 'immured' there is a sense that Adeline feels that she will be psychologically, physically and sexually walled up and barren. As well as its literal accuracy, we can compare this with the imagery later employed by Radcliffe in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, in which sexual awakening and receptivity is indicated by images of openings within walls. She suffers 'perpetual imprisonment, and imprisonment of the most dreadful kind, or the vengeance of a father...excluded from the pleasant intercourse of society ...

condemned to abstinence' (37). She is therefore doubly disenfranchised as a post-adolescent, Young Adult female, firstly abandoned by the only significant male figure she has known, and therefore potentially damaged in any future relationship with a man and secondly, denied her future as a fertile woman. This imagery is reinforced when she is finally been removed from the convent by her 'father'. He takes her to 'a lone house on the waste' (40) where she finds the window of her room barred and the door locked. Here she dreams that:

I was in a lonely forest with my father; his looks were  
severe, and his gestures menacing...he drew from his  
pocket a mirror, which he held before my face,; I looked in  
  
it and...saw myself wounded, and bleeding profusely.  
(41)

Psychoanalytical interpretations would see this passage as a further indication of the psychological molestation Adeline is suffering at the hand of her father. By looking into the mirror she is confronting the psychological damage her father's behaviour has caused – mentally she is 'wounded, and bleeding profusely'. There is also a reminder that Adeline's female pubescence/adolescence/Young Adulthood carries implications both of menarche, and of the initial sexual act which will physically wound her and cause bleeding. Modern research has shown that, as a result of poorer diet and general health, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries menarche would have occurred at an older age than currently, possibly at sixteen or later, and may well have coincided with an age when matrimony was being put forward as a possibility.

The male dominance in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century society, with its complicity in the power of men over women is reinforced by this image, but it gives a powerful message to adolescent/Young Adult females that this power can be misused, and that escape from such cruelty can be sought. As post Freudian readers we could identify Oedipal implications in this, but Radcliffe's readers, while not naming it as such, may have been no less aware of the sexual undertones of father-daughter relationships. However, even when Adeline has been taken from this house by La Motte, the nature of their existence, hiding in the ruined abbey 'overshadowed by high and spreading trees'

(15), demands that she has only limited access to freedom. Once the Marquis de Montalt begins his sexual pursuit of her she feels the need to repulse and avoid him at every opportunity, and therefore to remain even more confined:

She again attempted to go, but the Marquis prevented her...he threw himself at her feet...she...hurried from the room. When she reached her chamber, she locked the door...she threw a trembling glance upon the prospect around her. On the one side was her father, whose cruelty had already been too plainly manifested; and on the other, the Marquis pursuing her with insult and vicious passion.  
(122-3)

Radcliffe quotes from Collins' 'Ode to Fear' in epigraphs to Chapters XI and XV, reiterating her conviction of the relationship between fear, the sublime and sensibility, but Adeline's adolescent/Young Adult terror penetrates more deeply into her psyche as it reflects her fear of what lies ahead of her as she matures into womanhood. When she reflects '[o]n the one side was her father, whose cruelty had already been too plainly manifested' she is facing the subconscious sexual threat she has perceived from him, while she faces a more explicit threat in that 'on the other, the Marquis [was] pursuing her with insult and vicious passion'. In the phrase 'she locked the door', we see that she is preventing physical egress into her room, but also a mental state in which she wishes to prevent any entry into her body. Within the Abbey itself, readers are constantly reminded of the physical and mental restraints put upon Adeline, as she explores the underground rooms – the 'cells' (52) in which the monks lived, and in which she finds the skeleton of the man who she later discovers to be her real father. Adeline has just stumbled over a dagger, an appropriately phallic weapon, (and one which terrifies her for all its connotations of violent entry into an innocent body) when she overhears the Marquis telling La Motte 'I adore her...and by heaven...' (117). She can be in no doubt about what he is proposing. When she is abducted by the Marquis' servants, and taken to his chateau, Radcliffe's imagery indicates the fate which awaits her. Adeline arrives at 'the borders of the forest...a high lonely wall' (156), where her captor 'opened a small door in the wall' (156). These images, like those in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* discussed earlier, have powerful sexual connotations, indicating Adeline's fear of reaching complete sexual maturity via the sexual act itself. Radcliffe's adolescent and Young Adult readers would

have faced the same dilemma, and could be, in their reading of this text, enabled to confront their own fears through sharing Adeline's experience. As Radcliffe continues her description of the entry from woodland through doorway to narrow passage, and then a further door before gaining the 'magnificent saloon', we also follow the journey through the female outer sexual organs. This is a journey even more graphically described in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, discussed earlier in this chapter. In *The Romance of the Forest*, Radcliffe describes how:

[t]he door opened upon a narrow passage, dimly lighted by a lamp, which hung at the further end. He led her on; they came to another door; it opened and disclosed a magnificent saloon.

(156)

Here Adeline finds a scene of considerable exoticism, which resembles the setting of Fuseli's *Nightmare*, a picture which the author may have had in mind specifically, and which graphically represented the late eighteenth-century fascination with the psycho-sexual implications of dreams. The room is magnificent, but its very opulence threatens the reader with the foreign and oppressive enormity of any act which takes place within. The room is,

...splendidly illuminated...[t]he walls were painted in fresco, representing scenes from Ovid, and hung above with silk drawn up in festoons and richly fringed. The sofas were of a silk to suit the hangings. From the centre of the ceiling, which exhibited a scene from the Armido of Tasso, descended a silver lamp of Etruscan form; it diffused a blaze of light, that, reflected from large pier glasses, completely illuminated the saloon. Busts of Horace, Ovid, Anacreon, Tibullus, and Petronius Arbiter adorned the recesses, and stands of flowers, placed in Etruscan vases, breathed the most delicious perfume. In the middle of the apartment stood a small table, spread with a collation of fruit, ices, and liquors...the notes of soft music, breathing such dulcet and entrancing sounds...a female voice...now gradually swelled into a tone so exquisite, as raised attention into ecstasy.

(156-7)

Radcliffe's references to classical authors, especially that to Ovid, emphasize the lasciviousness of the setting, as they were all regarded in the late eighteenth century as

chroniclers of vice and hedonism. As we move through the description the language increasingly carries subliminal messages of seduction and rape, 'entrancing', 'swelling', 'ecstasy', and there can be no doubt that here is a warning to her young women readers that they should beware the outcome of extreme luxury and sensual pleasure.

The Marquis further seduces Adeline with '[a] song...written with that sort of impotent art, by which some impotent poets believe they can at once conceal and recommend the principles of vice' (161) and she experiences 'sweet delirium' (161). Yet when 'he threw his arm round her, and would have pressed her towards him', Radcliffe's readers might draw consolation that, should they be the subject of an intended sexual violation, they, like Adeline, might repulse their attacker and flee to the arms of an honourable suitor, as she does to Theodore Peyrou/La Lac.

To balance Adeline's destructive relationships with her 'father' and the Marquis, the romantic episodes with Theodore, and her other admirer, Louis La Motte, could reassure adolescent and Young Adult readers that not all relationships with men will be painful, though even here difficult decisions may need to be made. Adeline's gratitude to M. La Motte, who was the (largely unwitting) agent whereby she was removed from her uncaring 'father', a totally innocent emotion, is misinterpreted by his wife as the development of a liaison between them. Both Adeline and M. La Motte (as befits characters in a novel which celebrates the sublime and beneficial influence of nature in transcending earthly cares) find solace by taking solitary long walks in the tranquillity and beauty of the forest. La Motte's wife, however, assumes they are together, and moves from friendship and kindness to Adeline to become suspicious, jealous, and spiteful. Although he does not guess the real cause of her behaviour, La Motte reproaches his wife for her change of behaviour towards the girl, and this only serves to reinforce Mme. La Motte's fears. We are told that,

Her ill-humour proceeded from the usual cause. She had heard of Adeline's walk; and La Motte had gone forth into the forest at an early hour, her imagination, heated by the broodings of jealousy, suggested that they had appointed a meeting. This was confirmed to her by the entrance of

Adeline, quickly followed by La Motte, and her perceptions  
[were] thus jaundiced by passion...

(79)

Adolescent and Young Adult female readers then, as now, could have recognized from Radcliffe's characterization of Mme. La Motte that not only might they find themselves similarly accused – justly or unjustly – if they sought the protection (or more) of a married man, but also were helped to recognize the onset and guard against their own over-fertile imagination and unfounded jealousy of others.

Throughout *The Romance of the Forest* Radcliffe reflects the contemporary interest in the meaning of dreams. When M. La Motte, charged by the Marquis with killing Adeline, comes upon her asleep and determines instead to allow her to escape, the scene is very reminiscent of that pictured in Fuseli's *Nightmare*,

He undrew the curtain, and saw her lying in a profound  
sleep, her cheek yet wet with tears, resting upon her arm.  
He stood a minute looking at her; and he viewed her  
innocent and lovely countenance, pale in grief, the light of  
the lamp, which strong upon her eyes, awoke her, and,  
perceiving a man, she uttered a scream.

(230)

The setting, and the innocent girl, seen as intensely vulnerable in her unguarded sleeping position, being covertly watched by a man who intends to kill her, also leads the reader to consider what other violation would more often occur in such a setting. The drawing back of the curtain, to watch the pale girl who has fallen asleep weeping, lying with her face resting on her arm, are all images which portray La Motte (who here represents any man – the reference is to Adeline perceiving 'a man', not La Motte specifically) as a violator of female privacy and innocence.

It is in two dreams that Adeline first confronts the violent death which the prisoner in the Abbey suffered, a dream which 'so strongly impressed her fancy, that it was some time before she could overcome the terror it occasioned' and which Radcliffe uses to indicate Adeline's unease about her own past and her future. Readers will later discover that Adeline's dreams are about the imprisonment, torture and death of her real father, but for



her at this point, her unhappy family circumstances prevent her from feeling secure, from feeling independent, and from feeling able to accept a loving relationship with suitors such as Theodore. The issue of 'selfhood', the search for identity, lies at the heart of *The Romance of the Forest*. In her abandonment by the man she believes to be her father, Adeline is effectively an orphan, and readers later discover that she is truly an orphan, for her real father was the man imprisoned and murdered in the Abbey at the behest of the Marquis. Although overjoyed at her escape, first from the imprisonment of the convent, then from her uncaring 'father', and from the vicious intentions of the Marquis, as a result of these experiences she has no sense of her own true identity. Because of her unhappy past, she can see no possibility of a happy future:

[t]he prospect of her future days was involved in darkness and uncertainty. Again she was going to claim the bounty of strangers – again going to encounter the uncertainty of their kindness; exposed to the hardships of dependence, or the difficulty of earning a precarious livelihood. These anticipations obscured the joy occasioned by her escape, and by the affection which the conduct and avowal of Theodore had exhibited.

(173-4)

Like Radcliffe's images of Adeline's early imprisonment within dense forests and dark abbey ruins, which hold threats of the terrifying unknown, so her future is equally filled with 'darkness and uncertainty'. Still she has not gained the independence and status which knowledge of her family, and of herself, would give: she remains 'exposed to the hardships of dependence'. Only finding her place within family and thereby in society will allow her such knowledge. However, having passed through all the vicissitudes occasioned by her lack of family, Adeline finds happiness and contentment for a while with the Savoyard pastor La Lac, and his daughter. She has always been 'delicately sensible to the beauties of nature' (9), and Adeline's previous existence has been constrained within forest and ruined abbey, causing an agitated sublime response of 'mingled admiration and fear...[a] kind of pleasing dread (18)', to this dramatic but threatening landscape. Her escape with Peter to his native countryside brings a physical opening out of the landscape, a passage to the future, and her crossing of the Rhone

brings not only a sense of putting herself beyond the reach of the Marquis, but also a more contented response:

As they slowly passed up the Rhone, whose steep banks, crowned with mountains, exhibited the most various, wild and romantic scenery, Adeline sat in pensive reverie. The novelty of the scene...soothed her mind, and her sorrow gradually softened in to a gentle and not unpleasing melancholy.

(235-236)

Here we see the effect of nature on the senses, as 'the novelty of the scene...soothed her mind'. For her, sensibility is reached through a transcendent experience of the landscape: the influence of the sublime.

While 'gentle and not unpleasing melancholy' is the desired result of the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century contemplation of the sublime, it is also immediately recognizable as an essential quality of adolescence and young adulthood in any century. Adeline's feelings are certainly representative of behaviour identified by G. Stanley Hall as typical of adolescence. As was noted earlier in this chapter, he considered an ambivalence of feelings to be a key aspect of adolescent psychological development. He wrote that 'depressive are almost as characteristic as expansive states of consciousness' (1904:77), and his research has been endorsed by later psychological theorists such as Erikson (1950), Kohlberg (1971), Broughton (1981) and Gilligan (1982), all of whom are considered in Appleyard (1994). We have seen in Chapter 2 that Appleyard, in his analysis of reading modes from childhood to adulthood, sees adolescence as a developmental period in which the reader is primarily a thinker, and cites these theorists in his recognition of the adolescent dichotomy of emotion. Like the late eighteenth-century search for sensibility through the conflicted emotions of melancholy and pleasure which the sublime could engender, so we can see that adolescents (of any era) embrace both emotions with equal enthusiasm. All these we see in Adeline, and Radcliffe's young readers might recognize in her 'gentle, and not unpleasing melancholy', the confused and confusing adolescent struggle to understand the philosophical truths about experience.

As she reaches the physical and emotional safety of La Luc's chateau, on the fringes of the Alps, the landscape becomes vast and dramatic, but offers a further contentment through contemplation,

His chateau stood on the borders of a small lake that was almost environed by mountains of stupendous height, which...composed a scenery singularly solemn and sublime...their innumerable tints and shades...gave luxurious and magical colouring to the scene...the freshness of early day, with the glowing colouring which then touched the scenery, gave a pure and exquisite delight to her innocent heart.

(247-248)

Radcliffe here shows her total dedication to the views expressed in Burke's essay, and correlates her heroine's physical experience of nature with her psychological reaction to it. As a result Adeline's mental state is soothed. As well as the obvious dramatic splendour, with 'mountains of stupendous height, which...composed a scenery singularly solemn and sublime' and invoke a pleasurable awe, there is the beauty of the colours displayed, with 'their innumerable tints and shades...gave luxurious and magical colouring to the scene...the freshness of early day, with the glowing colouring which then touched the scenery'. This calms Adeline and gives, for the first time, 'pure and exquisite delight to her innocent heart'. Radcliffe also demonstrates, through the imagery of the landscape, that Adeline has passed psychologically from the dangers which (like the mountains) surrounded her, to the calm of life as part of a loving family, to a tranquillity expressed in the beauty of the lake. Her earlier experience has been crucial to her arriving at this tranquility of spirit, for it is the comparison with terror which she has felt which allows her to appreciate her new happier state. As she moves further towards the revelation that her lover Theodore is in fact the pastor's son, and the discovery of her own familial and individual identity, Adeline journeys through a landscape which widens yet further, and offers her further solace. Radcliffe shows Adeline leaving behind her uncertain past:

The distant coast, at length, entirely disappeared. Adeline gazed with an emotion the most sublime, on the boundless expanse of waters that spread on all sides: she seemed as if

launched into a new world: the grandeur and immensity of  
the view astonished and overpowered her...

(293)

With ‘an emotion the most sublime’ she is able to leave behind the ‘distant coast’ of her past, and look forward into ‘a grandeur and immensity of view’ – no longer a view restricted physically by her need to flee and hide from the men by whom she has been mistreated, or psychologically confined by her past. Adeline is indeed entering a new world – that in which the certainty of her family background enables her to confirm her own identity as part of her past, and to adopt her future as she moves forward out of adolescence and Young Adulthood into her female maturity.

As a Young Adult, Adeline has been portrayed as a fragile figure beset by the circumstances of her flight from predatory or malevolent males, lack of maternal guidance (once she views Adeline as a rival for M. La Motte’s affections, Mme La Motte ceases to be a credible mother figure), and absent paternal protection. When La Motte first sees her, Adeline is ‘a beautiful girl...[h]er features bathed in tears, and she seemed to suffer the utmost distress...sunk at his feet, and with supplicating eyes that streamed tears, implored him to have pity on her’ (5). Her vulnerability is indicated by her disarranged clothing. Radcliffe’s description is indicative of what could happen to her in this state of disturbance of mind and clothing, for ‘a habit of grey camlet...thrown open at the bosom...the light veil...had, in her confusion, been suffered to fall back’ (7). When first she encounters Theodore, as one of the Marquis’ retinue, she is again vulnerable to a potential threat for, having fainted, she recovers for him to see that,

[t]he negligence of her dress, loosened for the purpose of  
freer respiration, discovered those glowing charms, which  
her auburn tresses, that fell in profusion over her bosom,  
shaded, but could not conceal.

(87)

She faints whenever she is faced with a situation which threatens her sexual well-being, as when she is approached by the Marquis in the opulent and lascivious saloon, ‘she heard not his voice – she had fainted...when she unclosed her eyes, and again beheld him, she relapsed into a state of insensibility’ (158). Not only does this emphasize her delicacy, it also serves to titillate the reader, who imagines what might happen to Adeline

whilst she is senseless. Radcliffe may have intended in these scenes to warn girls of the dangers of being left alone with a man, but in so doing, she could also have whetted their appetite for such encounters, an appetite which could be vicariously satisfied in part by the text, but also extended by the adolescent imagination, stimulated by such literary scenes.

Although Adeline denies herself the possibility of romantic love because she believes herself to be without a family, there are several episodes in which Louis La Motte and Theodore declare their love and admiration for her. These passages could inform and reassure the Young Adult reader, showing what they can expect, and how to respond correctly. Louis is 'unaffected and graceful' (68), and 'he spoke...with an accent so tender, that Adeline...perceived the sentiments of his heart' (85). Theodore, although one of the Marquis' retinue, and therefore to be feared, is:

...a young Chevalier...a person, in which elegance was happily blended with strength ...a countenance animated, but not haughty; noble, yet expressive of peculiar sweetness. What rendered it at present more interesting, was the compassion he seemed to feel for Adeline, who now revived and saw him, the first object that met her eyes, bending over her in silent anxiety.

(87-8)

His appearance and manner, with his youth, elegance, strength, nobility and compassion emphasized, are unimpeachable, and such a suitor might be highly desirable to a young female reader. Adeline responds as any modest young woman should, for '[o]n perceiving him, a blush of quick surprise passed over her cheek' (88). Because Theodore, having rescued her from the Marquis, is first wounded by soldiers, and then imprisoned, Adeline is spared the difficulty of managing a growing romantic attachment to him. Theodore, however, has already fallen in love with her, for:

her loveliness made a deep impression on his heart: there was a sentiment in her beauty, which his mind immediately acknowledged, and the effect of which, her manners and conversation had afterwards confirmed...her countenance, with instantaneous magic, beamed peace upon his heart.

(172)

We may interpret this as an affirmation to the Young Adult girl reader that Adeline's behaviour has been exemplary, and could stand as a model for all young women who wish for a suitor as desirable as Theodore. We see how well they are suited to each other, for '[t]hat similarity of taste and opinion, which had at first attracted them, every moment now more fully disclosed' (190). It seems that Radcliffe is advising her young women readers that a truly happy marriage must contain more than mere physical attraction, and needs the unity of minds as well as bodies. Despite his honourable but impetuous intention of removing Adeline from any future attack by the Marquis, through marrying her, it is she who points out the problems inherent in this idea. Their exchange alerts young readers to the nature of a lovers' quarrel, for, in a scene of passionate exchange, Theodore is hurt and angered by Adeline's apparent indifference, and accuses her of 'a cold sentiment of gratitude' (192), and 'complacency' (193). When Theodore is awaiting trial for his attack on the Marquis, she receives letters from him and we are left in no doubt about her love for him:

...for a moment she felt as if in his presence, and the conscious blush overspread her cheek; with a trembling hand she broke the seal, and read the tenderest assurances and solitudes of his love; she often paused that she might prolong the sweet emotions which these assurances awakened.

(350)

We may justifiably feel that Radcliffe's observation of a young woman in love is accurate and engaging. Adeline blushes as she anticipates what may be written in Theodore's letter, and we imagine that she daydreams as she savours his words, and enjoys her own excitement as the object of his love.

However, only when she has discovered her true identity as Adeline de Montalt, and pleaded with the king for the release of Theodore, can Adeline consider marrying him, and we are told that '[s]he now received him as the friend to whom she was indebted for her preservation, and as the lover who deserved, and possessed, her tenderest affection' (355). Louis, who has kept his 'passion... raised almost to adoration' (354) for her, 'now relinquished even the faint hope which he had hitherto almost unconsciously cherished'

(354), as befits a thoroughly honourable young man. Adeline and Theodore are married, and Radcliffe presents a scene of domestic bliss to her readers, as '[Adeline] looked at Theodore...a smile of ineffable tenderness told him all she felt. He gently pressed her hand, and answered her with a look of love' (359-60). Having found her own real family, through her marriage she also enters legally into that borrowed family with whom she has found some contentment when she fled from the most tumultuous period of her life.

Radcliffe concludes *The Romance of the Forest* by stating the moral of the story:

...contemning the splendour of false happiness, and possessing the pure and rational delights of a love refined into the most tender friendship, surrounded by the friends so dear to them, and visited by a select and enlightened society – here, in the very bosom of felicity, lived Theodore and Adeline La Luc...Their former lives afforded an example of trials well endured - and their present, of virtues greatly rewarded; and this reward they continued to deserve – for not to themselves was their happiness contracted, but diffused to all who came within the sphere of their influence.

(363)

In her novel she has shown that Adeline has sought self-knowledge, 'contemning the splendour of false happiness', that her maturation has permitted her to discover 'the pure and rational delights of a love refined into the most tender friendship', and that both Adeline and Theodore show that 'trials well endured' will result in 'virtues greatly rewarded'. She reassures her readers that, whatever they may have had to endure on the way, right will prevail in the end, and a loving marriage is an outcome that even the apparently disenfranchised and disinherited can achieve. Moreover, she considers that their example – through her novel – will allow this happiness to be 'diffused to all who came within the sphere of their influence'. This offers us a convincing indication that Radcliffe intended her novel to be a conduct guide for those readers who can identify with her Young Adult heroine.

### 6.5 Conclusion: 'virtues greatly rewarded'

As we have seen in her concluding paragraph to *The Romance of the Forest*, Radcliffe's message to adolescent and Young Adult female readers differs little from that of earlier writing for this audience, and is no less didactic than that of the conduct books, or of Richardson in *Sir Charles Grandison*. We have seen that Gothic Romance was an immensely popular reading choice for teenage girls – Young Adults - in the late eighteenth century and for the first half of the nineteenth. We have also seen that writers of Gothic novels of terror were mainly women, and that their work was particularly appreciated by women. Of these novelists, Ann Radcliffe had a clear intention to instruct her readers, and, choosing a Young Adult female for her central character, directed her fiction at those who were perceived to need guidance in their preparation for mature adult life as a woman.

Not only did the Gothic Romance express the accepted notions of its time, and particularly sensibility, in a readily accessible, fictional form, but in its subject matter it provided information plots, characterization and situations of particular relevance to pubescent and newly post-pubescent females: Young Adult girls. Within the pages of these novels this group of readers could experience the traumatic dilemmas which faced the youthful heroines. Through their reading they might become better fitted to address their own concerns over relationships – familial, societal and personal, together with the process and consequences of maturation. These issues were crucial to the understanding of their own identity, an area of psychological development which is a constant source of concern to adolescents. For the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century girl, the patriarchal nature of society, marriage and family appeared to deny them a significant voice in their own lives. A confident understanding of their own selfhood therefore permitted them a degree of control over their experience, and it is likely that they sought this in part through their adolescent and Young Adult reading.

Appleyard, following Broughton, considers that it is the inner struggle for identity, and the conflict between an inner and outer self, which are responsible for such mixed emotional responses. Having progressed from a childishly unformed concept of self, the



adolescent and young adult (Appleyard's 'college and beyond') finds that there is a constant tension between the inner self, 'the locus of unique feelings, opinions and thoughts that can have a greater reality and importance than the objective events that occasion them' (96-7), and the outer self, 'the social role which has to be played' (97). This, together with hormonal inequalities which affect the mood, can lead to a sense of loneliness and isolation, to an intensified emotionality, and a considerable degree of self consciousness and introspection. From Appleyard we learn that the adolescent and young adult readers he researched particularly sought a sense of involvement and identification in their reading, citing realism, and a story which 'made them think' as the most important aspects (100). He suggests that it is 'the whole question of truth' which they seek to examine through their reading. It is 'competing values, beliefs, and behaviours, especially about emotionally painful subjects' which adolescents are just learning to confront (101). In particular we have seen in Chapter 2 that for Appleyard, young adults 'interpret' their reading, and this is of vital benefit to the full maturation of individuals, and their ability to operate successfully as adults.

By providing opportunities for the vicarious experience of physical and emotional trauma of particular relevance to young women, the sub-genre of Terror Gothic (as distinct from Horror Gothic) in general, and Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* in particular, offer the medium through which these confrontations might be made, in the privacy of the individual adolescent's and Young Adult's own reading experience. The next chapter will examine a body of fiction which offered a similar experience for the mid-nineteenth-century teenage girl.

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<sup>1</sup> In Aiken, J and A (1773) *Miscellaneous Pieces, in Prose*, London: Johnson.

<sup>2</sup> Probably written in 1798-1803 but published posthumously by her brother in 1817.

<sup>3</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1st ser., 93.87, quoted in Radcliffe's entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22974>, accessed 10/3/2006).

<sup>4</sup> Frances Hodgson Burnett's heroine Sara Crewe, an avid student of the French revolution at the age of twelve, reads it in *A Little Princess* (1905). Jonathan Rose in *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven, 2001:46) cites that in 1894, at the age of fourteen, Elizabeth Bryson read *The History of the French Revolution*, evidenced in her memoir, *Look Back in Wonder* (Dundee, 1966:80-81. Rose also identifies the twenty-year-old Mary Smith in whose book, *The Autobiography of Mary Smith, Schoolmistress and Nonconformist* (London, 1892), she cites Carlyle's work as a major influence on her life.

<sup>5</sup> In *Remarks on Forest Scenery and Other Woodland Views, (Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty)*... (1791).

<sup>6</sup> From Sarah Green, *Romance Readers and Romance Writers: A Satirical Novel*, 1810, which lampoons the absurdities and affectations of the contemporary novel.

<sup>7</sup> In Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1818) all seven 'horrid' novels noted down in Isabella Thorpe's pocket-book were Minerva publications.

<sup>8</sup> Isabella Thorpe's reading list comprises: *Horrid mysteries*, by K. F. A. Grosse, *The Necromancer* (1794), by K. F. Kahlert., *The Midnight Bell* (1798), by F. Lathom, *Castle of Wolfenbach* (1793), by E. Parsons, *The Mysterious Warning* (1796), by E. Parsons, *Clermont* (1798), by R. M. Roche, *The Orphan of the Rhine* (1798), by E. Sleath.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted at <http://home.earthlink.net/~lfdean/austen/history/fulltext.html>, accessed 20/04/07.

<sup>10</sup> *Ethelinde* quoted at <http://www3.sympatico.ca/bouray/essay3.htm>, accessed 05/05/06.

<sup>11</sup> Ann Radcliffe (1826) 'On the Supernatural in Poetry' in the *New Monthly Magazine* 7, 1826, pp 145-52.

## Part 2

### Young Adult Girls and their Reading:

#### The texts

## Chapter 7

### ‘Many lessons valuable to young ladies’: The Attraction and Power of the Sensation Novel

‘...Mrs Henry Wood’s *East Lynne*...to which the girls of England are much attached’

Edward Salmon, in *The Nineteenth Century*, October 1886

#### 7.1 The Rise of the Domestic Novel

In her introduction to the 1984 Rutgers edition of Mrs Henry (Ellen) Wood’s 1861 novel *East Lynne*, Sally Mitchell describes it as ‘one of the most astonishingly successful books of the nineteenth century’ (1984:vii). She states that,

[b]y the end of the century it had sold almost half a million copies in England, was pirated by two dozen American publishers, and was so popular on stage that its title became a watchword: “Next Week – East Lynne!” the posters promised whenever ...the... company needed surefire revenue.

(vii)

She considers its success to lie in Wood’s ability to interweave ‘two forms which became the mainstays of popular fiction - the sentimental woman’s novel and the sensation novel (forerunner of the detective story)’. In my account in Chapter 6 of Ann Radcliffe’s popularity and significance with adolescent and Young Adult readers it was seen that her Gothic novels attracted these readers because of the deliciously titillating terror they

contained. Sensation novels were to elaborate and refine this element of plotting, additionally providing their readers with the opportunity to follow clues which would lead them to the (re)solution of the mysteries they contained. This offered readers a new opportunity: for actively seeking the answers to questions posed rather than, as had happened with earlier texts, passively receiving information or instruction. *East Lynne*, only the second novel to be published in the genre, (Wilkie Collin's *The Woman in White* (1860) usually considered the first) rapidly became the chosen (though rarely admitted) reading of many adolescent and Young Adult girls, as evidenced by Edward Salmon's testimony quoted at the head of this chapter. I shall examine Salmon's findings later in this chapter. My survey of critical theory in Part I identified Reception or Reader Response approaches to be especially pertinent in any historical consideration of fiction enjoyed by Young Adult girls. The mid- to late nineteenth-century primary evidence substantiating the identification of the enormous popularity of *East Lynne* among this readership supports the use of these theories, and those associated with cultural materialism and book history. We shall see that there arose between the author, the publisher and the market (significant within which were girls approaching adulthood) an interdependent relationship which both reflected and dictated the needs of this readership.

## 7.2 Alternatives to the Gothic

Before examining *East Lynne* itself, however, it is appropriate briefly to consider the alternative fiction reading available to Young Adult girls in the earlier years of the nineteenth century. In the introduction to his edition in 2002 of Sarah Trimmer's *The Guardian of Education*, a periodical work published between 1802 and 1806, Matthew Grenby examines her part in the appraisal of literature being produced for young readers, asserting that by the 1790s 'most major children's books were publicly appraised' (1: xiv). Trimmer herself acknowledged that contemporary writers such as Hannah More, in *Strictures from the Modern System of Female Education* (1799), had a profound influence on the literature available for children, on the education of young people, and on novels and their effect on their young female readers. Of Anna Laetitia Barbauld's *Lessons for children, from three to four years old* (1778), Trimmer wrote that she 'gave a new turn both to the composition and the mode of printing of children's books' (2:44).

Nevertheless Trimmer might justifiably be classed as the first to attempt a systematic review of literature for young people, during her production of *The Guardian* (from 1802) considering earlier works as well as current publications. Trimmer divided her reviews into ‘Books for Children’, aimed at those under fourteen years of age, and ‘Books for Young Persons’, aged from fourteen ‘to at least twenty-one’ (1:65-66), basing her categories on those less defined but nonetheless recognized by Barbauld and the Edgeworths. Trimmer had clearly identified a specific Young Adult readership whose religious and moral education needed to be supported by appropriate reading during those formative years approaching adulthood. These priorities led her to specify that ‘[n]ovels, certainly, however abridged, and however excellent, should not be read by young persons’ (2:29).

In her historical overview of literary production for young people prior to 1802, Trimmer laments the propensity of adults to ‘put [novels] into the hands of young people’, and for their wider dissemination she blames ‘the establishment of Circulating Libraries ... [which] gave free access to books of all descriptions, and among them were many of those corrupting ones which were then in circulation on the Continent’ (1:61-66). The Gothic novels beloved of some of Austen’s heroines certainly included titles translated from French. Eventually, in line with most other critics, who were beginning to accept novels, and even to write their own (More’s *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* (1808) being an example), by 1806 Trimmer promises that she will provide in the *The Guardian* ‘remarks on some of the best modern Novels’ (5:427). She identifies Mrs Sherwood’s *The History of Susan Gray, as related by a Clergyman, and Designed for the Benefit of Young Women going to Service* (1802) as an ‘[e]xemplary tale[which] furnishes a most seasonable and edifying lesson to girls of the lower order’, and continues ‘with a little accommodation it might be applied with great propriety to the higher classes’ (1:267).

Mrs Trimmer was adamant that young people’s reading should be interesting, but that it should lead them in ‘the ways of piety and virtue, and secure them from the corruptions of the age ...’, and that its content should prevent them from ‘any exercising of the powers of imagination or indulgence in ‘romantic nonsense’ (1:61-66). She saw no

danger of Richardson's novels corrupting young readers, comparing favourably the reality of *Clarissa* (1748, but still, as was seen in Chapter 4, immensely popular at the end of the eighteenth century) with the sentimentality of Rousseau's *Julie, or The New Eloise* (1761), which had been translated into English in the year of its French publication, with a further nine editions following between then and 1800.

Had she been reviewing 'the best modern novels' by the 1810s, Mrs Trimmer would have been likely to endorse those by Mary Brunton and Barbara Hofland. Two of Brunton's three novels have self explanatory titles: *Self-Control* (1810) and *Discipline* (1815). Hofland's novels continue this style of titling: *Integrity* (1823), *Patience* (1824), *Decision* (1824), *Moderation* (1825), *Reflection* (1826), *Self-Denial* (1827), *Fortitude* (1835), *Humility* (1837) and *Energy* (1838), thus identifying to her audience both her moral intention in writing, and the theme of the volume. Hofland, initially a poet and from 1809 a writer of fiction and instructional books for children, influenced by More and Edgeworth, found her sales dwindling by 1820, and like Brunton before her saw the possibility of a market for novels for teenage girls. Writing about Hofland, Dennis Butts repeats Foster and Simons's assertion that in the nineteenth century (and as earlier chapters in this thesis have shown) there were 'hybrids [texts]' (Foster and Symonds, 1995:8), and that 'there was a far less rigid division between adult and youthful readership than is accepted today' (2008:115). He describes these novels as 'teenage novels' (114), and considers that *Decision*, with its central character Maria, who by becoming an iron merchant, seeks to repay debts her father has incurred, bears out Judith Rowbotham's observation that 'the creation of a body of fiction concentrating specifically on an adolescent middle-class market actually aided the expansion of women's role in society' (116, from Rowbotham, 1989:9). That market of reading girls, which supported Hofland's re-publication into the 1850s, nevertheless dwindled thereafter, and as Butts reminds us, '[w]e also have to bear in mind what Dr Johnson told Mrs Thrale – 'Remember always that parents buy the books, and that children never read them.' (118).<sup>1</sup> He acknowledges that little evidence survives which tells us how the young readers received these works, but that adults 'tend to emphasize their healthy morality' (118). This is supported by the inscription my own copy of *Integrity* which was

given on June 2<sup>nd</sup> 1860 to Annie Eliza Jones by 'her dear friend John Chaloner'.<sup>2</sup> We cannot tell the relationship between Anne and her benefactor, but we can see that Hofland's book was chosen *for*, not *by* her. In his bibliographic study of Hofland, Butts (1992) details the re-printings which took place, and confirms that her popularity had waned during the 1850s. William Caldwell Roscoe, writing in *The Prospective Review* of February 1855, comments on Hofland's books in an essay on 'Fictions for Children', in which, writing about Thomas Day's *Sandford and Merton* (1783), he considers that Hofland 'has brought something of this style down to our own time. Yet she too, we apprehend, is declining from her zenith' (quoted in Salway, 1976: 38). Roscoe suggests that this is because 'the deliberate sesquipedalian manner has now few votaries' (38) and the decline in popularity of 'its pompous periods and studied inculcation of morals' (38). Roscoe's opinion is that the use of 'a sly sidewind to influence the character of his reader' is 'a lost labour; it may spoil the story, but we doubt if it ever benefits the child' (38). Butts identifies Hofland's influence on Charlotte Brontë, particularly on *Jane Eyre*, but he cites bibliographical evidence to show that Hofland's books themselves possibly no longer suited the taste of Young Adult girl reader of the 1860s.<sup>3</sup>

In *Disciplines of Virtue* (1995) Lynne Vallone examines fictional examples of virtuous teenage heroines whose example was intended to entertain and instruct without the danger of corrupting their Young Adult girl readers. She states that '[i]n terms of the novel's development...books for girls featuring a girl heroine hold a unique place between the conduct novel/Evangelical novel and the domestic Victorian novel, containing aspects of the former and prefiguring the latter' (92), a view which reiterates Myers' identification of 'fiction self-consciously tailored for a teen audience' (Myers, 1989:21). In this context Vallone looks at Mary Brunton's three novels, all of which feature Young Adult girls as their central character. Brunton's work was deeply religious, though not without humour and touches of satire, and occasionally throws light on contemporary Young Adult girl reader response from 'the novel-reading Misses' (1819: lxxvii-lxxviii).<sup>4</sup> 'You have such strict notions,' said [Miss Dawkins], 'that I see Tom Jones would never have done for you.' 'No,' said Captain Montreville, 'Sir Charles Grandison would have suited Laura infinitely better' (*Self-Control*, Vol. II:135-

136). Brunton herself was an admirer of *Tom Jones* for the liveliness of its plotting, though she felt Richardson's work was more moral.<sup>5</sup> Like Butts' promotion of Hofland as an influence on Brontë, Dale Spender (1987:335-337) considers Brunton's to have been a significant influence on Jane Austen's work, particularly *Emma*. Brunton's last work was *Emmeline* (1819), unfinished and published posthumously, which was intended 'to shew, how little chance there is of happiness when the divorced wife marries her seducer' (Brunton's own words). Intended for 'My dear young friends!' (Preface to *Emmeline*, 1819), Brunton's themes were undeniably pertinent to Young Adult girls – her heroines learning how to evade the predatory men who pursue them – but, like Hofland's, their style was no longer popular. Although her novels had achieved several editions by 1852, they were not republished later in the nineteenth century. This presumably reflects the decline in the market for morally improving books of this style, and the move among Young Adult girl readers towards the livelier, more modern approach of writers such as Ellen Wood. We shall see that in *East Lynne* Wood deals with a subject very similar to that of *Emmeline*, and with equal moral intent but, as reading records, critical response and its publishing history prove, Wood's book became an immediate and lasting success. That Wood calls her book after the house at the centre of her story rather than (as Brunton or Hofland would) the vice she wished to castigate or the virtue to inculcate, certainly endorses Vallone's identification of the move from conduct to domestic novel.

As I shall show later in this chapter, neither Brunton nor Hofland appears in the reading choices of Young Adult girls which in the years between 1886 and 1888 informed Edward Salmon's survey of 'What Girls Read', nor do they figure among his recommendations of 'Books for Girls'. From their recorded reading it appears that the novels of the Gothic genre which particularly addressed the concerns of girls approaching adulthood but which apparently subverted current ideology, such as those by Radcliffe, offered a more readily (and palatably) acceptable patterns of conduct than the less Romantic (and more pedagogic) novels. By the 1860s their tastes had moved further still, and a new genre, seen by some critics at the time to be even more subversive, would attract their attention: the sensation novel, which offered the opportunity for readers to uncover their own solutions to the issues raised within their pages.



### 7.3 From the Gothic to the Sensational

Before examining *East Lynne* in detail it is also necessary to trace the path by which the novel of Gothic Romance moved towards the Sensational, and how authors such as Charlotte Brontë further empowered their readers to interact with their text, and thereby refine their relationship with the events of their own lives. The term ‘sensation novel’ emerged in periodical-based criticism of a range of crime, mystery and horror novels of the 1860s, possibly originating in America, but certainly having been used to describe work by Wilkie Collins as early as 1855 (Terry, 1983:181). It rapidly became the butt of intellectual parody, for example in a mock advertisement in 1863 in *Punch* and in Gilbert’s musical play eight years later, but its popularity amongst readers swiftly established it as a major genre.<sup>6</sup> Its particular attraction for adolescent females was precisely because of its interactive possibilities in pursuing the solution to a crime, and its heightened realism.<sup>7</sup> Winifred Hughes, in her influential study of the sensation novels of the 1860s, considers that ‘what distinguishes the true sensation genre as it appeared in its prime during the 1860s is the violent yoking of romance and realism, traditionally the two contradictory modes of literary perception’ (1980:16).

It has been argued that the use of plotted suspense in novel writing equates to the use of experimentation in scientific investigation, as it offers readers the possibility of weighing up a variety of alternatives offered. A more recent academic writer, Caroline Levine, considers that, with the development of suspenseful fiction as opposed to the received opinions and accepted conduct promulgated by earlier novels, there was introduced into adolescent (and other) reading ‘the activity of hypothesizing and testing in order to come to knowledge’ and thereby reach the truth (2003:8).<sup>8</sup> In this way, she argues, starting with what Levine considers are unsophisticated narratives, Radcliffe used suspense not merely to prolong the action, but designedly to question traditional expectations, particularly those related to female conduct. Levine argues that it was John Ruskin who encouraged authors to move towards the study of reality rather than the acceptance of conventional conceptions of nature, with his ‘Radical Realism’, expressed in *Modern Painters* (1843-60) and ‘The Nature of Gothic’, a section in the second volume of *The Stones of Venice* (1853). Ruskin is principally addressing representations of reality in the

visual arts and poetry, but his philosophy is equally applicable to fiction. Levine's interpretation of Ruskin is that,

[r]ecognizing representation's limitations pushes us, or provokes us, to learn about the otherness of the world. While imitation delights us with both its cleverness and our own, truthful art encourages a process of doubting and testing to arrive at a tentative understanding of the relationship between art and its objects. It invites us to enjoy our own curiosity.

(2003:60)

Levine continues:

Suspense is the experience by which readers learn to doubt their own convictions and approach the mysteries of alterity. Suspenseful plotting, then, is not the form of the real; it is the form of the acquisition of knowledge -- and specifically of a skeptical epistemology that insists on testing authoritative claims to truth.

(61)

In short, she considers, '[t]he goal of Ruskinian realism is the creation of a responsible relationship between the viewer and the real **by way of** [sic] the art object. For Ruskin, representation is valuable because, whether it succeeds or fails, it teaches us a new relationship to the world.' (61). Ruskin was an enormously influential writer and lecturer from the 1840s until his death in 1900, and his opinions on a wide variety of subjects were to influence the work of authors as well as practitioners in the fine and applied arts. His enthusiasm for realism, and his recognition of the important new relationship it offered, through the use of suspense, to allow readers to form their own opinions, has important consequences in any analysis of sensation novels. It is the interaction of the viewer or reader with art objects or literature which for him was the true purpose of artistic expression – in a literary context, reader response. Although Ruskin reviled sensation fiction itself, (for example in his essay of 1880 'Fiction, Fair and Foul') his insistence that the use of realism rather than romance in the arts more accurately allows us to form our own conclusions profoundly influenced the writers of fiction for the masses. In the course of examining the subject matter of *East Lynne* and Wood's proficiency in blending entertainment with instruction for her readers I shall revisit

Ruskin's Radical Realism as displayed in several Victorian narrative paintings which are pertinent to Wood's novel.

If Ruskin is right, it is exactly those aspects of the sensation novel which its contemporary critics reviled which allowed its readers to relate to it more purposefully than to any previous form of fiction. For adolescents and Young Adults, the ability to relate to the characters in their reading is vital if they are to gain knowledge and patterns for their own future conduct. Suspenseful realism offers this in an immensely accessible and purposeful format, offering readers an opportunity to engage with the text itself by following clues and endeavouring to solve a mystery before reading the solution provided by the author. Like Richardson, who in *Sir Charles Grandison* had engaged his young readers with the minutiae of everyday life, the writers of sensation novels were careful to set their work within detailed and recognizable representations of ordinary life and contemporary settings: the bourgeois and domestic. Melodramatic events and extremes of behaviour were placed within everyday situations described with meticulous factual accuracy, and were frequently interpreted to readers through the experience of young female characters. Collins had described his intentions in the preface to his novel *Basil* (1855), in which he stated that '[t]he more of the Actual I could garner up as a text to speak from, the more certain I might feel of the genuineness and value of the Ideal which was to spring out of it' (1862:iii-iv). It seems clear therefore that he had a didactic purpose in mind. The depiction of the young women in sensation novels was particularly realistic because of their authors' sympathy and insight into female psychology in general, and that of those approaching adulthood in particular. It was also driven by the response of that Young Adult female readership to its subject matter. We have seen in earlier chapters that issues of identity were a significant factor in the work of both Richardson and Radcliffe, reflecting the maturational concerns of their adolescent/Young Adult audience. In the sensation novel this became a major feature of the plot, and offered a further recommendation of the genre to its young female audience.

For Levine, the most skilled protagonist of this interaction between reader and text is Charlotte Brontë, and the ultimate text is *Jane Eyre* (1847), in which, in addition to the

physical mysteries which face Jane in her life at Thornfield Hall, there is an internal suspense over the decisions she must make about her future. It is interesting to note, therefore, that *Jane Eyre* has remained firmly amongst the highest rated favourite reading of adolescent girls in the one hundred and sixty years since its first publication. In twenty-first-century recommendations of material best suited to, and most read by teenagers, such as *Stories from the Web*, *Jane Eyre* is as prominent as Rosoff, Pullman or Haddon.<sup>9</sup> Both Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* and her sister Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, published in the same year, may be seen as examples of an intermediate stage in the development of the novel between the Gothic and Sensation forms. Scholarly discussions of *Jane Eyre* can be found in writings about both Gothic and Sensation novels, and Brontë's novel is claimed by academics who write on both of these genres. Gilbert and Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Imagination* (1979, revised 1984 and 2000) incorporates a discussion of *Jane Eyre* as Gothic fiction (as well as taking its title from a significant part of the plot), while Hughes' *The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the 1860s* (1980) sees Brontë's novel as one of 'two direct ancestors of the sensation novel' (8). The title of Hughes' book also acknowledges this view.

The plot of *Jane Eyre* seems to indicate that Charlotte Brontë was familiar with the Gothic genre. The books read by Jane Eyre herself, however, include only novels which predate the Gothic: Swift (*Gulliver's Travels*, 1726), Henry Brooke (*The Fool of Quality; or the History of Henry Earl of Moreland*, 1766), Johnson (*Rasselas*, 1759) and Richardson (*Pamela*, 1740). It seems likely that Brontë herself had read these novels, but that any Gothic novels that she had enjoyed were omitted from the child Jane's list of reading. However she writes at length of the child Jane's fascination with *Gulliver*, which 'I perused with delight' (1994:23), and which contained 'a vein of interest deeper than any I had found in fairy tales' (23). This confirms what the American Daniel Wise, writing about juvenile reading tastes in 1855 admits, that '[t]he principle [*sic*] object of reading, with most young persons, is pleasure. They seek for excited sensibilities and a charmed imagination...' (c1855:186).

I shall not examine Charlotte Brontë's novel in any detail, extensively analysed as it has been by generations of literary theorists and critics. It should be noted however that it shows many Gothic influences especially in the episodes which contrast dismal, dark and sinister interiors with the rugged open landscapes outside. Brontë refers obliquely to the Perrault fairytale '*La Barbe bleüe*' (Bluebeard's Castle), thereby implying sinister secrets awaiting her heroine's discovery, and adds auditory terror to the visual, titillating her readers with accounts of 'a demoniac laugh—low, suppressed, and deep' (1994:149) outside Jane's bedroom. None of this would have been out of place in a Gothic novel. Brontë tantalizes her readers with the possibility that this is a supernatural being, or even some horror from the past. In fact this night time visitation is instead a very real murder attempt on Jane's employer.

Crime, and murder in particular, are typical elements of the plotted suspense in sensation novels, and with the addition of a plot line which places the possibility of adultery or bigamy to the fore, Charlotte Brontë's novel moves further from the genre of the feminine Gothic, as demonstrated by Radcliffe, towards the sensational. *Jane Eyre* revolves around the difficulty of obtaining a divorce, as the novel predates by ten years the *Matrimonial Causes Act* of 1857. This made divorce less costly and less difficult for the general population to obtain, and the consequences of divorce became a central theme of a great number of sensation novels – it is perhaps no coincidence that the emergence of the genre is usually dated to 1860 with Collin's *The Woman in White*. Published in the following year, Ellen Wood's *East Lynne* also hinges around this topic, as it reflects the ideological changes on a marginalized sector of society – married women - brought about by this change in the law affecting them.

The predominant themes of *Jane Eyre* are those of the sensation genre – a central character who is female, the search for identity, the nature of social status, women with secrets, marriage as a threatening event, adultery, divorce, characters who 'double' each other. Moreover, both Charlotte Brontë's use of plotted suspense, and her intricate unpicking of Jane's psychological state throughout the novel (both aspects of what Henry Mansel was later to condemn in sensation fiction as 'preaching on the nerves') place *Jane*

*Eyre* firmly as a prototypical sensation novel rather than from the Gothic genre.<sup>10</sup> In publishing her novel anonymously as ‘an autobiography edited by Currer Bell’, Brontë was laying before her readers a text purporting to be real life, designed to entertain, inform and instruct Young Adult girls.

In her sister Emily Brontë’s novel, *Wuthering Heights*, we find a novel set in the early years of the nineteenth century, full of Gothic descriptions, but in its psychological insight, the dramatic events and the complex relationships it examines, also clearly moving towards sensation fiction. The story of *Wuthering Heights* unfolds a complicated mystery in a series of first person recollections, letters and diaries, as immediate and involving for the reader as the epistolary novel of Richardson. It abounds in Gothic influences, as the initial narrator is prompted by a supernatural encounter with the heroine, whose story he then relates. The Gothic is even more obvious in Emily Brontë’s novel than in Charlotte’s, and reminds us of the imagery in art and literature in the late eighteenth century which was a consequence of the emerging scientific approach to psychology. Emily, through her narrator, writes ‘[t]he intense horror of nightmare came over me...’ (1964:20), recalling the Fuseli image which I discussed in Chapter 6.

Like Charlotte, however, Emily Brontë had moved beyond the Gothic, and the intricate plotting of her story, always keeping the reader involved and uncertain about how a resolution may be reached, is more that of the sensation novel. Her story involves the pseudo-incestuous love between Heathcliff and Catherine, adoptive brother and sister, which transcends absence, marriage to others, and even death. These are subjects as dramatic and fitted to a sensation novel as adultery or divorce, and the interplay of plot and characterization provides readers with truly suspenseful fiction. Identity is again a major concern, both for the foundling who has a desire for revenge against all those who despise or thwart him, and for his stepsister, his great love. She is drawn passionately to an unsuitable lover, but chooses to marry an adoring but insignificant suitor.

*Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* have been favourite novels with young female readers since first they were written, and the inspiration for many subsequent adaptations and re-

writings<sup>11</sup>. Both are the work of sisters whose emotional life was as outwardly restricted as it was internally confused, passionate and adolescent. Groundbreaking in their own time, and each vividly expressing the dilemmas facing young women approaching maturity, in their construction they looked forward to that genre so concerned with the intricacies of female experience, the sensation novel.

#### **7.4 *East Lynne* as a Suitable Novel for Young Adult Girls**

At the beginning of this chapter we saw that ‘Next week – *East Lynne*!’ was a promise made by many mid-to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century theatres when they needed to improve their audience figures. In advertising one of the many dramatisations of Ellen Wood’s novel in this way, they acknowledged its enormous popularity. The adaptations themselves (which usually pared down the complicated plot but emphasized the melodrama) acknowledged the ever-increasing audience of readers who could access, and delighted in novels generally, and sensation novels in particular.

In Chapters 4, 5 and 6 I showed that many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century commentators on education, literature and morality, considered that the reading of fiction had a malign influence on women and the young, and therefore on impressionable Young Adult girls in particular. As I shall show later in this chapter, by the end of the century, the response of the readers themselves (particularly women readers, and notably young women readers) was to buy and read these novels in their hundreds of thousands. Despite (or perhaps because of) its popularity, sensation fiction was roundly condemned in many influential circles. In November 1864, the Archbishop of York spoke to the Huddersfield Church Institute, and expressed his conviction that sensation fiction was dangerous for ‘exciting in the mind some deep feeling of overwrought interest by the means of some terrible crime or passion’ (report in *The Times*, November 2<sup>nd</sup> 1864). The novelist and critic Margaret Oliphant, writing on ‘Novels’ in *Blackwood’s Magazine* of September 1867, looks back to an age when ‘family reading’, with its ‘certain sanity, wholesomeness, and cleanliness’ could be properly recommended to the young, while in the *Quarterly Review* of April 1863, in an article castigating ‘Sensation Novels’, the writer (probably Henry L. Mansel, later Dean of St. Paul’s) likens the impact of sensation

fiction to 'a virus spreading in all directions'. As well as its subject matter, it is its cheapness and easy availability (for example as cheap 'railway' editions rather than three-volume editions at a guinea and a half) which in Mansel's view promotes it, and makes it so dangerous to the vulnerable readership of young people, girls and the working classes which frequents the circulating library or devours the contents of the shilling magazine. He particularly dislikes those sensation novels whose authors state a didactic intention, '[b]ut all this is done, as the author tells us, "with a purpose," to warn fast young ladies, forsooth, of the fatal consequences to which fastness may lead them!' (501). He further laments 'we have known young persons, familiar with the latest products of the circulating library, who not only had never read Scott, but who had no idea that he was worth reading' (503), and recognizes that Scott has been consigned to 'the fate which he lamented as having befallen Richardson, Mackenzie, and Burney' (503).

To counter this view, there were those, such as Justin McCarthy (a journalist at this point and later a novelist himself), in 'Novels with a Purpose' (*Westminster Review*, No. 26, 1864) who had praised sensation novels for their psychological realism, or for their use as 'an admonition to young ladies not to let their fancies run away with them' (a correspondent in the *Medical Critic and Psychological Journal*, 3, 1863). However, given the majority view that sensation fiction was populist and therefore unsuitable for respectable readers, it is perhaps surprising to find that, in the pages of the October 1886 issue of that respected magazine *The Nineteenth Century*, *East Lynne* had also been recommended as an excellent choice of reading for girls. There Edward Salmon, a frequent contributor of articles about literature and its readers, wrote,

*East Lynne*, in my humble judgement, ought to be placed in every girl's hands as soon as she has arrived at an age when she may find that life has for her unsuspected dangers. The work teaches many lessons valuable to young ladies, especially those of a jealous or impulsive disposition.

(*The Nineteenth Century*, vol. 20, October, 1886:524)



Salmon considers that prescribing or restricting girls' reading for pleasure is pointless, as '[i]ndividual reading must depend upon individual taste, save of course, when reading solely for study and instruction' (525). He acknowledges that,

Girls are, of course, among the chief supporters of the lending library, and eagerly rush after what Mr Ruskin would call 'every fresh addition to the fountain of folly,' in the shape of three-volume novels.

(524)

Edward Salmon's recommendation is, of course, made a quarter of a century after the original publication of *East Lynne*, but testifies to the continuing popularity of that novel, and to its right to be regarded as a text read by Young Adult girls, and designed not only to entertain but, as he says, to teach 'many lessons valuable to young ladies'. Although, as Salmon notes, Ruskin deplored 'the fountain of folly', it is the realism which Ruskin sought in art which the writers of sensation sought to provide in their novels, setting them in a modern world of railways, telegraphs and domesticity. Both the sensation novels which I shall discuss, *East Lynne* and Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, are somewhat anomalous within the genre, each having a protagonist who is *punished* for their transgressive behaviour, and thereby offering a clearer resolution to readers. Ellen Wood's intention to offer instruction as well as entertainment in her first novel, and Braddon's salutary messages about matrimonial murder will be examined later in this chapter.

Salmon contributed several articles to the press about public reading habits, including those in 1886 and 1887 which specifically addressed 'What Girls Read' and 'What Boys Read'. His findings will be examined in detail in Chapter 8. What is significant in relation to *East Lynne* is that in 1888 Salmon produced 'an elaboration of articles... contribute[d] to *The Fortnightly Review*, *The Nineteenth Century*, *Atalanta* and several newspapers' (1888:10). By 1890 he was also writing in *The Parents' Review* in support of Andrew Lang and John Ruskin, both of whom opposed the censorship by parents of their children's reading (1890, 5:342). *Atalanta*, subtitled 'Every Girl's Magazine' was edited by L.T. Meade (herself a notable writer of fiction for adolescent and Young Adult girls), and published from October 1887 to 1898. In this Salmon wrote book reviews

under the heading 'From Cover to Cover', and would have had access to the reading choices of the magazine's young patrons, providing authoritative data for his analysis of adolescent and Young Adult reading habits. When Salmon collected his periodical articles for the 1888 book, *Juvenile Literature As It Is*, he noted in his preface that '[t]he criticisms on these articles...have proved of immense value, and have shown me not only where I have gone astray, but where the public goes astray also' (10). The text of the articles from *The Nineteenth Century* is split between two chapters, 'What Girls Read' and 'Books for Girls', and records revised data, includes recommendations to new authors but otherwise repeats Salmon's findings from two years earlier.

There is, however, one notable exception. In the table of data (an image of part of the table is in Appendix 1:291) 'Mrs Henry Wood' maintains her position as girls' sixth most popular author out of 48, after Dickens, Scott, Kingsley, Yonge and Shakespeare, with Miss Braddon twenty-fifth, and 'C. Brontë' a surprising twelfth from the bottom. The favoured titles of Dickens (*David Copperfield*), Scott (*Ivanhoe*), Kingsley (*Westward Ho!*) and Yonge (*The Daisy Chain*) are named, but neither Braddon nor Brontë's texts are specified. However although *East Lynne* is named in the table of girls' favourite novels, Salmon has removed entirely his own recommendation of Wood's work, and of *East Lynne* in particular. Instead he makes a passing reference to girls reading Ouida and Miss Braddon, both writers of sensation or romantic (rather than Romantic) novels, and notes that '[m]others...now consent to their daughters studying' them (136), but himself makes neither overt recommendation nor condemnation of sensation fiction. Why has Salmon revised his list? We can only speculate that his opinion that *East Lynne* 'teaches many lessons valuable to young ladies' was not popular with the guardians of those young ladies' conduct, and that pressure was put upon him to remove his recommendation that Ellen Wood's work 'should be placed in every girl's hand'. Whatever the late 1880s may have thought of its suitability, *East Lynne* appears to be a novel written with an explicit purpose to warn and guide Young Adult girls who might soon be faced with marriage. The popularity of the novel, and of its author, in Salmon's table of favourite books, place it in the line of instructional Young Adult fiction which started with *Sir Charles Grandison* and continued through *The Romance of the Forest*.

Mitchell considers that *East Lynne* ‘exemplifies middle-class values yet subverts the authoritarianism of a patriarchal father’(1984: vii) – which indeed it does, as we shall see – but I would argue that, by the very act of reading it, its mid-century young female readers were further subverting mid- to late nineteenth-century ideology, itself a paternalistic construct. Like the Gothic novel, the sensation novel, disapproved of by so many of those who promoted the high moral ideals by which society *appeared* to live, became the reading choice of those young women who resisted (as adolescents and Young Adults frequently do) the pressure that society asserted to dictate their reading as well as their life choices. By taking their own decision to read these novels, against the advice of their mentors, they chose to read subversively and thereby apparently to challenge the ideological foundation of respectable life.

One of the few who recorded her reading of Wood’s blockbuster was Margaret Penn, the illegitimate foster daughter of a working-class family in a Lancashire village. In her autobiographical novel *Manchester Fourteen Miles* (first published in 1947), Penn writes of her *alter ego*, Hilda, noting that ‘[t]he Reverend Vane showed great interest in her reading, and advised her earnestly to get the novels of Mrs Henry Wood out of the Co-op library. He recommended warmly *East Lynne*’ (1982:178). Penn’s heroine Hilda, whose fictionalized experiences Penn acknowledged as her own, was twelve years old in 1908, a voracious reader who persuaded her illiterate stepmother, who was ‘deeply and firmly suspicious of every book that Hilda read’ (178-9), that *East Lynne* was a suitable text, for ‘even she could scarcely find fault with books recommended by the Reverend Vane’ (179). Hilda is later found ‘deep in *Robinson Crusoe* or *East Lynne* or *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* [so that she] heard nothing and saw nothing’ (183). She writes that ‘even Lily’s [Hilda’s foster sister] vicious pokes never really broke through the magic circle that the book made for her’ (183). That Isabel Vane, the central character of *East Lynne*, shares her surname with the fictionalized clergyman might be considered a coincidental testimony to Penn’s lifelong enthusiasm for Wood’s novel. This semi-fictional commendation of Wood’s novel by a clergyman is ratified by factual evidence of its use as a moral exemplar.<sup>12</sup> Penn’s record of her response to her reading of *East Lynne* as a twelve-year-old, the ‘magic circle’ the book created for her, shows us how enthralled she

was with this fictional account of characters and events within the world of female adulthood and relationships she was about to enter.

Ellen Wood, née Price, more usually known (and always published until recently) as Mrs Henry Wood, wrote *East Lynne* when she was forty-seven. Ten years earlier, in 1851, she had begun to contribute short stories to journals, her writing subsequently offering the family a measure of security following the withdrawal of her husband from business in the mid 1850s. Although Wood was middle-aged by the time she wrote *East Lynne*, the novel's immediate and considerable popularity among the public and recommendation by the press – initially in serial form in the *New Monthly Magazine* – might be taken to indicate that her portrayal of late adolescent females and their marital anxieties was both recognisably accurate, and engaging.<sup>13</sup> Having married at twenty-two and borne at least five children, including two daughters, Wood seems well-fitted to reveal the dilemmas that love, marriage and parental responsibility bring, as well as the evil of insecurity and jealousy which may undermine these relationships. In 1897 Adeline Sergeant, writing about Wood and her novel, attributed 'half [the novel's] popularity' to a 'reaction against inane and impossible goodness' which hitherto had been the accustomed characterization of a literary heroine (1897:181).

The complex story of *East Lynne* is principally that of Isabel Vane, an eighteen-year-old at the start of the novel, her love for, marriage with, and estrangement from, a young solicitor, Archibald Carlyle. Unknown to Isabel, Carlyle is assisting Barbara, the nineteen-year-old sister of Richard Hare, determined to investigate the truth behind the murder of Hallijohn, of which her brother has been accused. Having borne him two children, Isabel becomes consumed with a jealous conviction that Carlyle no longer loves her, because he is secretly meeting Barbara Hare, and because she has overheard servants gossiping of Barbara's infatuation with him. Her despair becomes so intense that she responds to the renewed advances of an unscrupulous former suitor, Captain Levison, leaves her husband and young children, and travels with him to live what soon becomes a squalid life in France. Carlyle, convinced that she will never return, divorces her, and instructs his children that they should never again refer to Isabel as their mother. Quickly

abandoned by Levison, Isabel and the child she has borne are involved in a railway accident in which the child dies, and Isabel is so gravely injured that reports of her death appear in the newspapers. As a result Carlyle feels that he is now morally free to marry Barbara, to whom he has become increasingly close since his wife's departure. When she recovers from the accident Isabel becomes severely depressed by the intense guilt she now feels for her previous actions, and, convinced that her death is imminent, becomes obsessed with a desire to see her children again before she dies. She answers an advertisement and is engaged as governess by Carlyle and his new wife, an action made easier by adopting the name Madame Vine, and never appearing without a heavy veil and shaded glasses to mask the scarring she received in the accident. So disguised, she now must not only endure the daily presence not only of Carlyle's new wife, of the husband and children she loves above everything else, but also listen to their confusion and unhappiness at her abandonment of them, and finally witness the slow decline and death from tuberculosis of her young son. After his death her identity is discovered, she and her former husband are reconciled, and she dies. Interwoven with this is the story of the unsatisfactory relationship between the Hare parents and their children, and of the two Hallijohn sisters: Afy, selfish, vain and dishonest, and Joyce, a loyal supporter of Isabel to the end, despite everything she has done. A significant portion of the narrative, which also clearly defines the novel as one of sensation, is the investigation of the Hallijohn murder, which eventually proves that it was Levison, not Richard Hare, who was the killer.

From the outset, Wood seeks to involve her readers directly in her narrative. It is likely that *East Lynne* was read and enjoyed by men (it seems that the Prince of Wales and the novelist Joseph Conrad enjoyed the novel) as well as women, Wood's narrative using a personal and conversational tone – a realistic rather than a romantic approach – which might easily engage and retain the reader's interest. Because the chief character is a young woman, and its plot revolves around issues of female response to a male-oriented culture, *East Lynne* may be seen to seek to engage female readers generally, and Young Adult female readers in particular. Justice Hare, a man with antiquated and immutable views, offers the opinion that liking a proposed husband was unnecessary for a girl,

asking Barbara '[w]ho asked you to like him as a husband before he became such? Did you ever hear it was necessary or expedient, or becoming for a young lady to set on and "like" a gentleman as "her husband"?' (312). Ellen Wood, nevertheless, warns her readers that choosing a husband from passion is just as misguided. She speaks directly to the individual reader, addressing her as '[y]oung lady...', warning her that men's initial passion does not last, a theme she returns to at various points in the novel:

[y]oung lady, when he, who is soon to be your lord and master, protests to you that he shall always be as ardent a lover as he is now, believe him if you like, but don't reproach him when the disappointment comes. He does not wilfully deceive you; he only forgets that it is in the constitution of man to change, the very essence of their nature.

(2005:198)

Wood warns her readers that they need to be prepared for the relationship to change, '[t]he time will arrive when his manner must settle down into a calmness, which to you, if you be of an exacting temperament, may look like indifference, or coldness' (198); and that 'you will do well to put up with it, for it will never be otherwise' (198). Moreover she immediately emphatically repeats her point, leaving her young women readers in no doubt, '[n]ever' she reiterates, for 'the heyday of early love, of youth, and of novelty is past' (198).

Readers are constantly reminded of the presence of the author in the narrative. At critical points in the novel, where her female characters face a particularly difficult decision, the author intervenes in the action to address her readers: not only (as Sally Mitchell's *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry says) 'calling on their sympathies to interpret the characters' motives', but also to justify those characters' decisions and actions (ODNB:2004). Wood, determined to guide her readers to the right conclusions, ensures that her Young Adult girl readers are fully aware of the consequences of the actions and decisions which her female protagonists could make. In Boulogne to recuperate from illness following the birth of her third child, Isabel meets Levison again,

and continues to take walks with him even when her health no longer demands an escort.

The narrator comments directly on this:

[n]ow where was the help for this? You may say that she should have remained in-doors, and not subjected herself to his companionship. But the remaining indoors would not have brought her health, and it was health that she was staying in Boulogne to acquire, and the sooner it came the better pleased it she would be, for she wanted to be at home with her husband and children.

(208)

Wood anticipates the possibility of her readers making sanctimonious judgements on Isabel's decision to continue her walks, and therefore defends it as the result of her wish to recover quickly and return home to her family, while acknowledging that instead it results in the gradual revival of her teenage infatuation with Levison. We see Isabel's dreadful insecurities through the rhetorical questions which Wood poses in her text: '[h]ow could she ever doubt [her husband]' (219), '[w]hy did she not confide herself?' (225). When she later makes her crucial moral decision and runs away with Levison, leaving her husband and children behind, the narrator interjects 'Oh, reader, believe me! Lady – wife – mother! Should you ever be tempted to abandon your home...' (283). It is clear that what will follow this statement is practical moral advice to her readers, to advise them of their duty, not to emphasize the sensational quality of the action; later in this chapter I shall discuss the particular (and, I argue, intentional) appropriateness of it to her young female readership. However, the way in which she ensures that her advice is obvious and immediate to her readers is by directly addressing them. She continues,

...if you think, my good reader, that the flattering words, the ardent expressions which usually attend the beginning of these promising unions, last out a whole ten months, you are in egregious error. Compliments, the very opposite to honey and sweetness, have generally supervened before long. Try it, if you don't believe me.

(285)

We might almost imagine the figure of the author, seen in profile as she observes and describes the scene, now turning to face us, to speak to 'my good reader', and, having delivered her defence of Isabel's actions, despite her pronouncement that passion does

not last, challenging us to '[t]ry it, if you don't believe me'. Wood is no advocate of such unquestioning and self-deprecatory devotion by a wife. Throughout the novel we see that Barbara's mother has devoted her life to accommodating her irascible husband's every wish. Wood's readers are shown in Mrs Hare a woman disempowered by her own devotion, unable to make up her own mind, for '[s]ince her husband had first brought her to that house, four-and-twenty years ago, she had never dared to express a will in it; scarcely, on her own responsibility, to give an order' (21). Wood does not recommend to any young woman that her life with a future husband should be, like Mrs Hare's, 'one long yielding of her will to his', so that 'she had no will' (21). Despite this she cannot condone Isabel's behaviour. She can, however, explain and excuse it. When, almost at the close of the novel, Wood states 'I shall get blame for it, I fear, if I attempt to defend her' (590), she puts Isabel's case to her readers, placing upon them the responsibility for her actions, and of making a moral judgement on her behaviour. This device shows the directness of her style, and the way in which she constantly draws her readers into the action to engage and involve the audience she wishes to influence.

It is evident, therefore, that Ellen Wood intended her novel to be read by those to whom its subject is most pertinent: Young Adult girls, girls like Isabel Vane and Barbara Hare who, in their late teens, are about to encounter love, infatuation and temptation as they consider marriage, and the additional responsibilities of domesticity and motherhood once they have made that decision, or had it made for them. Wood also undoubtedly wished to reach as extensive a readership as possible, both in numbers and taste. The melodramatic language she uses to achieve this was criticized by Margaret Oliphant who thought that 'Mrs Henry Wood wrote like a respectable chambermaid' (1888:841), and that her books were 'fitted to be the delight of the back parlour' (1895:647). In the same way that in *Grandison* Richardson used letters between his protagonists, and detailed the minutiae of everyday life, very like a twentieth/twenty-first century TV soap opera, Wood's use of a populist genre and literary style made *East Lynne* easy reading and accessible to a wider public, resulting in its swift republication in various formats in many countries. Mitchell considers that the success of *East Lynne* lay both in the changes in the reading public (as we have already seen, occasioned by cheaper and more



widely available fiction), and in Wood's particular skill. As I noted earlier, this she sees as 'interweaving two forms which became mainstays of popular fiction – the sentimental woman's novel and the sensation novel' (1984:vii), and the sensation novel itself Mitchell summarises as 'secrets, surprises, suspense and shocks to the nerves and emotions' (xi-xii). As we have seen, these were the ingredients of the Gothic novel which particularly attracted young women, which became refined during the early years of the nineteenth century, and, with the addition of Ruskinian realism, to which readers could increasingly relate as they became part of the sensation novel. What better way could Wood have sought to engage, entertain, and advise an adolescent female readership?

### **7.5 'An admonition to young ladies not to let their fancies run away with them': The Moral Messages of *East Lynne***

The genre which in *East Lynne* she helped create, and the style of Wood's authorship were, therefore, particularly attractive to Young Adult girls, and created a powerful involvement between reader and text. I shall next examine the guidance for her readers which Wood sought to convey within that text. Mitchell considers that *East Lynne* 'takes up issues of perfect ladyhood, feminine individuality, divorce, sexuality, repression and revenge' (1984:vii). These are not concerns for *young* women alone, but Wood's novel speaks to its young female readership specifically, both by addressing them directly (as we saw earlier in this chapter) and by considering the issues through the experience of two young women from their late teenage years into their twenties. Isabel Vane becomes Isabel Carlyle at eighteen, and despite her married status is still prone to the uncertainties that beset a Young Adult, while Barbara Hare remains unmarried into her early twenties. In Chapter 4 I considered the increasing length of Young Adult girlhood, and Lerer's opinion that Mary Cowden Clarke's series of books published between 1850 and 1852, *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines*, reflects the development of a mid-century consciousness of a new category of girlhood.

If we consider *East Lynne* in the light of the definitions, by Agnew and Nimon and by McCallum, of modern Young Adult fiction, also quoted in Chapter 4, we may see how

fully Wood's book meets those requirements. Agnew and Nimon identify as key 'romance, relationships, and the difficulties of family life...', that they are 'predominantly concerned with real life rather than fantasy...' and that they 'frequently examines 'issues' considered to be of interest to teenage readers...' including 'a teenage identity which differs from that of either adulthood or childhood...' (775-776). Of her list of fifteen 'common thematic and ideological concerns', McCallum states, '[u]nderpinning the list is a common pre-occupation with subjectivity, especially the development of notions of selfhood, relationships between self and others and between individuals and society'. McCallum's detailed list comprises three groups: personal issues, intrafamily issues and interpersonal issues. Within these she identifies subject matter typical to young adult literature which concerns 'sexuality, romance, pregnancy', 'intergenerational and/or sibling conflict, family breakup' and 'disharmony between personal situation and contemporary culture or society', together with 'alienation' (2006, 4:216). She considers that young adult literature 'will typically include concerns with one or more of the following', and of the fifteen identified, the narrative of *East Lynne* specifically addresses:

...a sense of "knowing where one is going"  
the establishment of a separate identity  
a recognition that the immediate future demands choices  
among conflicting possibilities  
the struggle between public and private concepts of self  
the struggle between dependency and independence  
experience of physical sexual maturity  
mature personal relationships  
achieving emotional independence of parents and other  
adults ...

(217)

McCallum emphasizes that 'the majority of these motifs would seem to be the domain of young adult literature, but not particularly so of general adult fiction (217). It is the predominance of these issues within *East Lynne* which makes the argument so strongly for its having been written for a Young Adult girl readership.

### **7.6 *East Lynne* as Young Adult Novel: Relationships, Romance/Adolescent Passion and Jealousy, and their Outcome**

In addition to personal relationships and alienation (an issue of identity), McCallum highlights intergenerational relationships as a key topic of literature for Young Adult readers. In *East Lynne* this is a key element its status as a sensation novel, as Richard Hare becomes a fugitive from justice, reviled by his intolerant and dictatorial father, ineffectually supported by his inadequate, sickly and husband-dominated mother. Barbara alone has the strength, the independence of character (though no personal independence from her parents) to support him and attempt, through investigation of the events, to clear his name of Hallijohn's murder.

In the Hares, Wood describes a dysfunctional family, in which Mrs Hare's indulgence to her son when a sickly child, probably as a substitute for her affection in the place of her unsympathetic and overbearing husband, has been used by Justice Hare as a source of ridicule against both wife and son. Richard asks Barbara if his father is as bitter against him as ever, and hears that '[h]e never mentions your name, or suffers it to be mentioned' (35), violently dismissing a servant 'as I believe nobody else in the world can thunder' (35) for continuing to call his room '“Mr Richard's”' (35). Wood continues, 'I know that he never treated me as he ought,' cried Richard bitterly. 'If my health was delicate, causing my poor mother to indulge me, ought that to have been a reason for ridiculing me on every possible occasion, public and private?' (35). In an accusation which would not be out of place in any twenty-first-century Young Adult novel he continues, 'Had my home been made happier, I should not have sought the society I did elsewhere' (35). We are shown many instances of Mr Hare's 'stern, imperative, obstinate and self-conceited' (21) behaviour, from his response to Barbara, on returning after her clandestine meeting with her sibling, '“You ought to have been in bed an hour ago,” angrily responded Mr Justice Hare' (37), to his attitude to his wife's illness, '“All nonsense”' (229). Mrs Hare's inability to make her own decisions, 'timid, gentle and submissive' (21), and the fact that '[s]ince her husband had first brought her home to that house, four-and-twenty years ago, she had never dared express a will in it' (21) have removed from the family any check to her husband's dominance, and effectively orphaned the children, removing

their mother's influence, if not (in Richard's case) her overpowering love. Wood shows in the marriage relationships of both Mrs Hare and Isabel, that duty to one's husband can, with the overbearing interference of another – Justice Hare in the former case, Miss Corny Carlyle in the latter – destroy a wife's identity in her own household and family, with disastrous and tragic results. Young Adult girls might take this lesson, but some would undoubtedly be drawn further into the novel not only by the intricate detection pursued by Barbara on behalf of her sibling, but by recognizing from their own experience the intergenerational conflict within in any family, taken to such dreadful lengths amongst the Hares.

Defining the essential qualities of Young Adult literature, Agnew, Nimmon and McCallum name 'romance' high among their identifiers. Early in the novel, Wood's depiction of Barbara Hare's adolescent passion for Archibald Carlyle (what might be described now as a 'crush'), would engage any teenage girl reader who has suffered a similarly unrequited passion for an older man. As Barbara hears his footsteps 'a sudden change came over her; her eyes lighted up, her cheeks were dyed with crimson, and her veins tingled with excess of rapture – for she knew those footsteps, and loved them, only too well' (2005:23). She reacts ecstatically to the smallest indication of his friendly (always friendly, never romantic) affection: '[h]e...placed [her] hand within his own arm...It was done in a matter-of-fact, real sort of way, with nothing of romance or sentiment: but Barbara Hare felt that she was in Eden' (24). His gift to her of a locket and chain elicits an equally extreme reaction, 'her colour rising...Her cheeks' crimson came and went, her heart beat more rapidly. She could not speak a word of thanks' (25). She is encouraged by Carlyle's dismissal of rumour about his relationship with Lady Isabel, she answers him 'with a swelling heart', then as deeply hurt by his referring to Isabel's 'angel's face'. Barbara 'turned her own face full upon him: it looked pale...' (78). As she watches Archibald Carlyle and Isabel Vane's relationship progress, she is described as watching 'woman-like, rival-like – for in that light had Barbara's fanciful and jealous heart grown to regard Lady Isabel' (109). Wood shows that jealousy is a dangerous emotion, which gnaws away at the rationality of those who possess it: 'Barbara could not forget Isabel Vane. She had never forgotten her, or the jealous feeling that arose in her heart at Mr

Carlyle's constant visits to East Lynne when she inhabited it.' (126). Although on the one hand Barbara realizes that Carlyle is 'indifferent – matter-of-fact' (129), on the other she refuses to moderate her passion, and even deludes herself that he will choose her over Isabel. Such fantasies lead her to misinterpret any response from him as a positive sign and to think, 'Oh the bliss this night had brought forth' (129) despite his obvious lack of romantic feeling for her. Even when Carlyle and Isabel are married, Barbara still cannot accept that her feelings should change, and instead she becomes increasingly resentful of Isabel. When Carlyle offers to take her home after she has visited him and his new wife,

Barbara's heart beat at the words; it beat as she put her things on; as she said goodnight to Lady Isabel...it beat to throbbing as she went out with him and took his arm. All just as it used to be – only that he was now the husband of another. Only!

(162)

While understanding their immature reactions and sympathizing with such adolescent angst, Wood is nevertheless warning her young readers against the immoderate and dangerous reactions they engender. For them, as for Barbara, harbouring unrealistic passions amount to 'dreamland...enchanted and most delusive fascinations' (31).

Faced with the hard fact that Carlyle has secretly married Isabel, Barbara is plunged into grief and anger, reacting with a violence that typifies adolescent behaviour:

[s]he swiftly passed upstairs to her own room, and flung herself down on its floor in utter anguish. The past had cleared itself of its mists; the scales that were before Barbara's eyes had fallen from them. She saw now that while she had cherished false and delusive hopes, in her almost idolatrous passion for Archibald Carlyle, she had never been cared for by him.

(134)

Wood leaves her readers in no doubt that Barbara has been ignoring what others could plainly see. She has built Carlyle up to god-like status with 'an almost idolatrous passion'. Barbara's judgement has been clouded by 'mists' and 'scales', she has cherished 'false and delusive hopes' which have been obvious to Carlyle's elderly sister Cornelia who, about to tell her of the marriage, realizes '[y]ou are going to be taken down

a notch or two, my lady' (133). Until that moment Barbara had still reacted to the news of Carlyle's return to East Lynne with '[a] flush of gratification that rose to her cheek and dyed it with blushes' (133), but now 'she knew that from that hour her life's sunshine had departed' (134). Seeing Carlyle and his new wife in church, 'her face wore a grey, dusky hue...which... [she] could not subdue. Her covetous eyes would wander to that other face...sheltered under the protection of him, for whose sheltering protection she had so long yearned' (152). Barbara's dreadful jealousy which has 'so changed [her] that she's not like the same person' (179), is, nevertheless, a state from which she can recover, and Wood's young readers ultimately see that she finds happiness, that Carlyle can come to love her. We may consider that Barbara has been permitted the ultimate reward for her obsession with Carlyle, but Wood is clear that this can happen once Isabel is believed dead, both metaphorically, in the Carlyle family relationship – by eloping with Levison – and (apparently) physically, in the railway accident. Barbara's love is 'true and lasting... one that defied time and change' (234), and 'having to bury it wholly within her' separates her love for Carlyle from that of Isabel for Levison. Although she tries, Isabel is powerless to bury her love, driven by her immature need for someone who appears to give the total and passionate love she craves. Barbara also shows a selfless side to her character in her efforts to prove her brother's innocence, and her care for her invalid mother. Barbara has only committed the 'sins' of a normal Young Adult girl in mistakenly (and wilfully) imagining herself loved, in resenting the wife who has supplanted her, and Wood's Young Adult readers are reassured that they too can be happy despite the emotional turmoil of their immaturity, as long as they do no harm to others.

For Isabel Vane there is no such resolution, because the nature of her infatuation, both with Carlyle and with Levison, leads her to such intractable jealousy that she abandons her husband and children in search of an unattainable happiness. In doing so Isabel has wilfully failed in her ultimate societal role as a woman, that of wife and mother. Young female readers see that for Isabel the wages of sin truly are death, and are warned by Wood that the jealousy and impetuous decision making of an immature outlook must be curbed, or the consequences are dire. Yet Wood understands how Isabel has come to act

in this way and, as we have seen earlier in this chapter, constantly turns to her 'young lady' readers to explain and justify Isabel's actions, though never to excuse them.

Isabel is a Young Adult girl who, though she matures physically into a mother (and ultimately a prematurely aged woman), remains immature emotionally, behaving as irrationally as if she were still an inexperienced teenager. Carlyle's shrewd – and frequently shrewish – sister calls her 'that ignorant baby' (135), 'befrilled, bejewelled, and becurled' (135), a girl whose life has hitherto been sufficiently pampered to prevent her grasping the realities to which, as wife and mother, she must adjust. Carlyle is so besotted with her, so attentive and indulgent of her wishes, that she cannot conceive that he has a life or friendship beyond that in which she is the centre of attention. Cornelia Carlyle likens the union to that of Beauty and the Beast, Isabel the 'high-born beauty, brought up to revel in expense, in jewels, in feasts, in show' (135), he 'a harmless lunatic...a dull bear of a lawyer, like the beast in the tale' (134-5). We see Carlyle as a husband not only rapturously in love with his wife, but who considers her as a child, an object over which he watches and which he owns entirely:

There was his wife. She had fallen asleep, her head leaning against the trunk of the tree. Her bonnet and parasol lay at her feet, her scarf had dropped, and she looked like a lovely child, her lips partly open, her cheeks flushed, and her beautiful hair falling around. It was an exquisite picture, and his heart beat quicker within him as he felt it was his own. A smile stole over his lips as he stood looking at her.  
(150)

In an age which had ever-increasing access to contemporary painting through engravings and reproductions in periodical magazines, art influenced both readers and writers, and Ruskin's 'radical realism' influenced the artists to paint scenes from everyday life or religious narrative which would morally guide those who saw them. Wood's description paints an image as clearly as that in any Victorian narrative painting. Many of the images explicitly cited in my discussion of sensation literature are reproduced in Appendix 3:312-313. Isabel appears as a child, care-less, vulnerable, her clothes disturbed, her 'lips partly open', flushed, her hair loose on her shoulders not fastened up as an adult woman's would be. It is a highly sexualized image yet ambiguous as Isabel, for all she is married

and accustomed to a privileged life, *is* an innocent, a child in the ways of the adult world. Carlyle cossets her as ‘a gentle, tender plant I have taken to my bosom and vowed before my Maker to love and cherish’ (151-152). This total indulgence, together with Miss Carlyle’s constant criticism and antagonistic attitude towards her, keep her from the reality of running her own household - ‘little more than an automaton’ (167) and ‘completely inexperienced... unfit to battle with the world’ (168), - and force her to remain in an unnatural, immature, protracted Young Adulthood. I shall return to the question of Isabel’s childlike, immature identity in the second part of this section.

In contrast to Barbara’s unrequited passion, even when she has married him, Isabel feels no sexual attraction to Carlyle; ‘I never thought of such a thing as falling in love with Mr Carlyle’ she tells her guardian ‘with a pretty, innocent blush’ (136), and whisper[s] timidly, ‘No...[b]ut I like him much – oh very much. And he is so good to me’ (136). ‘I shall love my husband in time’ she responds, and her guardian ‘involuntarily exclaim[s]’ ‘[m]y poor child’ (136). Isabel, so fully indulged by a husband who loves her ‘passionately and sincerely’ (139), is bored at East Lynne, once her childhood, now her married, home. She ‘wander[s]’ through the rooms, disenfranchised both from her past and her present. ‘I don’t know anything about the keys’, she replies when her maid requests them, ‘I never keep them’ (150). Asked by her husband how she spends her days, she responds, sighing, ‘Oh, I hardly know...[t]rying the new piano, and looking at my watch, wishing the time would go quicker, that you might come home’ (150). Miss Carlyle describes her as ‘quite wrapped up in [him], ...[she] watches for his coming home like a cat watches for a mouse. She is dull without him.’(159). Isabel is dependent on Carlyle in every way – her life promising to become, like Mrs Hare’s, ‘one long yielding of her will to his’ - and this prevents her from taking a mature view of his relationship with Barbara, from seeing it as he sees it, an old friendship which allows him to help her clear her brother’s name.

Wood skilfully shows Barbara’s infatuated, immature jealousy of Isabel to be unlike the consuming married jealousy that Isabel feels when she fears that her husband is developing a clandestine relationship. Initially overhearing two of the servants gossiping



that Barbara might give her a 'bowl of poison', Isabel asks her maid to explain. The explanation, that is was 'only a bit of nonsense... that people think Miss Barbara was much attached to Mr Carlyle, regularly in love with him' (158) causes in Isabel 'a sensation very like jealousy' which 'flew to her heart' (158). 'No woman likes to hear that another woman either is or has been attached to her husband: a doubt always arises whether that feeling may not have been reciprocated' (158), Wood observes, and from this point Isabel can never regain the certainty that Carlyle is hers alone. She watches Barbara's 'damask cheeks turn to crimson at the sight of him' (159), and while Barbara herself observes Carlyle's total absorption in his wife 'with a low moan' (161), Isabel, 'growing more attached to her husband day by day' (162), fears that the old, imagined, affair is reviving. As Carlyle walks her home one evening Barbara angrily reproaches him for ignoring her love. Though now twenty, her behaviour remains that of an overwrought, lovesick teenager: 'If I go under the sod to-morrow' she says 'stamping it with her foot', 'you have your wife to care for. What am I?' (164). Wood emphatically reassures her readers that Carlyle is blameless, for 'a dim and very unpleasant consciousness of the truth began to steal over him' (164), and he tells Barbara that 'I only thought of you as a friend, as a sister' (165), dismissing her emotional outburst as 'moonshine; the sentimental rubbish that girls like...' (166). Faced with Isabel's question '[y]ou never loved Barbara Hare?' he answers emphatically 'I never loved but one woman; and that one I made my wife' (167). Fearful that she will not survive childbirth, Carlyle gives a cry 'half horror, half despair' (173), but still, despite his affirmation that he is thankful '[t]hat *you* are safe my darling; safe and spared to me' (174) Isabel is convinced that his concern is not for her but for his child.

Her child-like position in her own household, her pregnancy and the difficult birth of her daughter, continue to constrain Isabel within her privileged yet powerless state, which engenders both *ennui* and agitation. Her fears, never fully dismissed, are revived by once more overhearing gossiping servants, one of whom describes the apparent love tryst in which Carlyle ended Barbara's hopes. This incident is completely misinterpreted, both by servant and mistress, and Isabel becomes convinced that her husband never loved her, and that he wishes to marry Barbara. Fuelled by 'jealousy and fever, ay, and love too,

playing pranks with her brain' (180) she confronts him, and despite his lengthy and, we are certain genuine, reassurances, Isabel's jealousy consumes her.

In her depressed condition her dreams are filled with fears that Carlyle does not love her, that he is awaiting her imminent death, and she cannot believe that this is not so. Wood warns her young readers that jealousy is a totally destructive emotion, more powerful even than any love: '[t]here never was a passion in this world, so fantastic, so delusive, so powerful as jealousy' (182). Despite Carlyle's devotion to his wife, her judgement has been fatally impaired by her jealousy of Barbara, who 'dwelt on her heart like an incubus' (183). Readers could compare this with Barbara's shame at her own passionate outburst to Carlyle, which weighs on her conscience 'like an incubus' (163). Where Barbara regrets her actions, Isabel 'afterwards suffered the unhappy fear to regain its influence' (183), for she is too consumed by jealousy to think rationally. In my chapter on the Gothic novel, I discussed the significance which medical and psychological thought of the time placed upon dreams and their connection with an incubus. Wood's image of Isabel's fevered dreams recalls the Fuseli painting *The Nightmare* discussed briefly in Chapter 6, with its image of an incubus sitting on a vulnerable young woman who is asleep. Isabel, despite having physically achieved the states of marriage and motherhood which mid-eighteenth-century opinion thought would overcome the propensity to nightmares, emotionally remains immature, prone still to the sicknesses which Young Adult girls suffered in menarchy. Wood's readers might well have known *The Nightmare*, which had been reproduced many times, and upon which countless other images had been based, since its first appearance in 1781.<sup>14</sup> Whether they did or not, her reference to the incubus would have suggested to her Young Adult girl readers a terrifying visual depiction of Isabel's destructive sexual jealousy. They are reminded of this in the course of the visit of Isabel's guardian to Grenoble, after she has eloped with and then parted from Levison: '[w]hat demon prompted you to sell yourself to that bad man?' (304) he asks. At this point Isabel realizes that it was 'her own blind jealousy...utterly mistaken and unfounded' (305) which 'wickedly and madly' (307) had driven her to abandon her 'upright and good' (307) husband and her children.

In her account of Isabel's relationship with her husband, Ellen Wood has portrayed her as an innocent, an impressionable, immature girl whose social and developmental disempowerment leaves her prey to consuming jealousy. Wood also shows her readers that this continuing state of immaturity - equivalent to a protracted Young Adult girlhood - is a stage when girls can find themselves ensnared by unscrupulous and predatory men. Before her father's death, as a teenage girl, Isabel had been wooed by Captain Francis Levison. Wood's description of him shows her readers immediately that he is a physically attractive but untrustworthy man: 'a young and elegant man...deemed handsome, with his clearly-cut features, his dark eyes, his raven hair, and his white teeth: but, to a keen observer those features had not an attractive expression' (14). When first Isabel meets him Wood leaves us in no doubt about his true character: '[f]ew men were so fascinating in manners (at times and seasons), in face, and in form, few men won so completely upon their hearers' ears, and few were so heartless in their heart of hearts'(15). Society 'humours' him, however, because 'though he was a graceless spendthrift, and it was known that he was, he was the presumptive heir to the old and rich Sir Peter Levison' (15). We even see him through the scornful eyes of other, equally predatory, men as 'that rake Levison... curled hair ...shining teeth...white hands; he's as heartless as an owl' (19). They recognize his skill in manipulating women, for when he has betrayed a woman 'the [other] women protested that he was more sinned against than sinning' (19). He is 'a rascal' (19). Introduced to him, Isabel 'a child yet in the ways of the world' (15), 'blushed crimson at the admiring looks cast upon her by the young Guardsman' (15), a young lady who is clearly susceptible to the polished charms of the experienced socialite. Significantly, a later encounter with Levison, at her guardian's home, is made immediately before Easter, in Passion Week. Wood subtly scatters her clues to Isabel's future for her 'Young lady' readers to discover, and armed with the information they may ponder what their own behaviour might be in such circumstances. In the second part of her novel Wood will provide them with sufficient evidence to prompt them along a different path from that chosen by Isabel.

We are further warned that Francis Levison will wield an evil influence over her, for as he passes Isabel her necklace, a cross on a chain, it falls and he treads upon it, breaking it.

Even Isabel sees it as 'an evil omen' (17), for it was a gift from her dead mother. As readers we can see that Isabel has been left particularly vulnerable without the benefit of a maternal guiding hand to move her from being 'a child in the ways of the world' towards womanhood. To an unkind relative, who 'never had been a girl herself, she had been a woman at ten' (18), Isabel appears to be 'little better than an imbecile...a baby idiot' (18). Even more telling is the image of the broken cross, which Isabel uses when 'in any distress, or in need of counsel, to look at it, and strive to recall what her advice would be' (17). The breaking of the cross presages Levison's influence in the final break up of Isabel's marriage, and her abandonment of her Christian duty as wife and mother. Later that evening he seeks her out again, 'expressing his regret at the untoward accident of the cross' (19) and whispers 'the heartfelt homage of my whole life would not be sufficient compensation' (19). Isabel reacts with 'a vivid blush' as any unsophisticated girl might to 'a tone of thrilling gentleness...eyes fixed upon her with the deepest tenderness', for it is, as Wood emphasizes, 'a language hers had never encountered' (19). Throughout this episode Wood warns her Young Adult girl readers that for the inexperienced young woman, behaviour like Levison's is 'gratifying to the ear but dangerous to the heart' (19).

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the married Isabel, older but no less 'a child in the ways of the world', consumed with her 'incubus', her jealousy of Barbara, develops what amounts to an adolescent infatuation when she meets him again. Ill and convalescent in Boulogne, she cannot resist 'his fascinating smile in full play' (205), nor his attentive concern for her. Carlyle has just returned to England, admonished 'half jest, half serious' (204) by her that he should not 'get making love to Barbara Hare while I am away' (204). She, without her husband and children to confirm her married status, acts like the young girl which, in her experience of independent and empowered life, she has never ceased to be. Assured by Levison that 'Mr Carlyle...will thank me for my pains' (207) she can find no reason to decline his offers of assistance in her walks. Wood's young readers, however, are alerted to the fact that Isabel recognizes that 'those old feelings were not quite dead in her' (207), and, as I showed earlier, are asked directly by her, '[n]ow what was the help for this?' (208). Instead of criticizing, Wood justifies Isabel's behaviour,

emphasizing that she wants to get well quickly to be at home with her husband and children.

It is interesting to speculate on the reception in the 1860s by Young Adult girls to Wood's description of Isabel's inexorable descent into passion for Levison. Although we are always aware of his unprincipled intentions, he is a superficially attractive and attentive man, likely to ensnare some of the Young Adult girl audience as subtly and firmly as he does Isabel. Reading that Isabel's new, healthy, bloom 'deepened to a glowing crimson' because 'she could not stifle the knowledge, however she might wish to do so, that it was not the place or the sea-air which had renovated her heart and her countenance' (210) might well recall an episode in that girl reader's own life, or imagination, in which they felt as she does. That reader, like Isabel, might also 'inwardly pray...for strength and power to thrust away from her this dangerous foe, that was creeping on in guise so insidious'(210). Wood acknowledges the danger for, try as she may, Isabel is as powerless against her adolescent emotions as she is in her married life, for '[s]he was aware that a sensation all too warm, a feeling of attraction towards Francis Levison, was working within her', and that it is 'not a voluntary one' (211). For Wood's readers, her warning message is one of which Isabel is equally aware, that 'she could no more repress it than she could repress her own sense of being', despite 'the stern voice of conscience' (212). Isabel believes that it is 'as impossible for her ever to forsake her duty as a wife, a gentlewoman and a Christian, as for the sun to turn round from the west to the east' (212), but Wood's readers remember that cross, broken by Levison on her first meeting with him, and are forewarned that Isabel's efforts to resist will prove as powerless as her attempts to achieve psychological and social maturity in East Lynne. We read that, despite her attempts to avoid him, when with Levison 'her heart beat with something too like rapture' (214) and that Isabel might as well 'stop the breeze as it filled the sails of the passing vessels' (214).

Assailed again even before her return to East Lynne by the jealous fear of Carlyle's relationship with Barbara during her absence, Isabel is easy prey to the 'sinful happiness' (216) she experiences when Levison declares his love for her. Hearing of his proposed

visit to East Lynne, 'her first sensation was as if the dull earth had opened and shown her a way into paradise' (223). We may speculate that, despite the knowledge that she should prevent his visit, she finds herself unable to 'open [Carlyle's] eyes to that dangerous man' (225) because, emotionally immature and fearful of her husband's fidelity, she cannot relinquish the possibility of affection which continued acquaintance with Levison promises. Child-like she craves affection, and self-centred as a child is, that affection must be total, to a degree that Carlyle, settled into the 'calmness' of marriage, is unable to provide for her. Convinced by reports of their clandestine meetings that her husband and Barbara are conducting an affair (whereas they are, of course contriving to collect evidence of Richard Hare's innocence), 'the jealous doubts...confirmed' (271), Isabel turns against her husband for 'in her blind anger, she hated him then' (271). Wood's young female readers may have despaired at Isabel's misinterpretation, sympathized with her anger, but were probably both thrilled and horrified by her final willing acceptance of Levison's passion. The scene Wood describes is as titillating and melodramatic as that from any modern soap opera, designed to engage her young readers totally, to test their reaction should they be faced with such a dreadful situation. Levison, in a scene which reminds us of the abductions by villains of the heroines of *Sir Charles Grandison* and *The Romance of the Forest*, contrives to join Lady Isabel in her coach and ensure that she witnesses her husband with Barbara Hare 'coupled lovingly together' (271). Capitalizing on this, Levison comforts Isabel, as he 'dared to put his arm around her, to draw her to his side; to whisper that his love was left to her, if another's was withdrawn' (271), while she, 'most assuredly out of her senses that night', acts from the pent-up jealousy she has so long endured. 'A jealous woman is mad; an outraged woman is doubly mad' (271) states Wood, as she provides us with a reason for Isabel to be persuaded by Levison's 'sweet and dangerous sophistry' (271) which encourages Isabel to '[l]eave your life of misery, and come to happiness' (271). She provides her readers with no happy outcome, however, rather warning in the next chapter heading of the fatal consequences of such overpowering jealousy: 'Never to be Redeemed'.

Lady Isabel's disillusion is swift, and Wood, while justifying her heroine's elopement both within the note Isabel leaves for her husband and the judgement her maid makes,

leaves her Young Adult female readers in no doubt that such a course of action, however caused, irrevocably contravenes the expectations society places on any wife and mother. ‘How fared it with Lady Isabel?’ Wood asks for her readers, and answers ‘[j]ust as it might be expected to fare, and does fare, when a high-principled gentlewoman falls from her pedestal’ (283). Isabel, and Wood warns, her readers, having taken ‘a blind leap in a moment of wild passion’, finds not ‘a garden of roses’ but ‘an abyss of horror’ (283). As we saw earlier in my chapter, directly addressing her audience as ‘Lady-wife-mother!’, the narrator emphasizes Isabel’s dreadful fate for, ‘she knew that her whole future existence...would be one dark course of gnawing retribution’. Her young readers are left in no doubt, and warned against unrestrained passion, jealousy and impetuous action.

### **7.7 Issues of Identity/Alienation**

Agnew and Nimon, together with McCallum, highlight issues surrounding identity as a crucial identifier of fiction for young adults, particularly ‘a teenage identity which differs from that of either adulthood or childhood...’ (McCallum, 217). We have seen already how, upon marriage, Young Adult girls of this period relinquished their own identity (however slight, as a female child, that identity might be in the eyes of society), and became a facet of their husband’s identity. The custom of titling a woman by her husband’s first and surname (for example ‘Mrs *Henry* Wood’ rather than ‘Mrs Ellen Wood’) testifies to the total subsuming of female identity within that of her spouse. Isabel Vane, already emotionally damaged by her father’s death and the shame of his debts, feels herself to be totally without home, family, or friends, and bereft of identity. Told by Archibald Carlyle that some time before he had secretly bought both her father’s house and furniture, and that the family linen and jewels will pass to the inheritor of her father’s title, Lord Mount Severn, Isabel asks, in distress ‘[a]re my clothes my own?’ (98), adding ‘I have no home; no home and no money...I have nothing’ (98-99). She has lost the identity she had as daughter, and the position she had as the daughter of a peer of the realm. Faced with this, and with the enmity of the wife of her father’s heir, Isabel Vane agrees ‘with gratitude’ to become Isabel Carlyle. However, where most married women would achieve some form of identity as mistress of their husband’s household, Wood shows us that Carlyle’s interfering older sister denies her even that.

From the outset Isabel is portrayed as a child, never achieving an identity as a Young Adult girl, unable to make the considered choices which a girl approaching marriage might. 'Isabel was little more than a child', Wood confirms, 'and as a child she reasoned, looking neither far nor deep' (120). We have already seen that the future Lady Mount Severn calls her 'a baby idiot' (18), and Miss Corny speaks of her as 'an ignorant baby' (135), while the new Earl addresses her as 'my poor child' (136). Even before she begins to fear Barbara Hare's relationship with her husband, Isabel is totally uncertain of her position in the household, asking Carlyle 'may I undress at once and not go down again to-night?' (142), while all his reassurances are constantly undermined by his sister's countermanding his own and his new wife's wishes.

Disenfranchised of even the identity she might have as mistress of the household, Isabel, although wife and mother, can never grow up, never become a mature adult, but must remain childlike, and prey to emotional insecurity. Here an interesting comparison may be drawn with Braddon's sensation novel *Lady Audley's Secret* for, as I shall discuss further in the next section of my chapter, Lady Audley, whose devious past life we gradually discover in the course of that novel, strives to appear childlike, innocent and vulnerable. Isabel Vane however is genuinely so, prevented or protected by others from becoming a fully functional, responsible adult. Shown up for her lack of housekeeping knowledge, she readily hands over the ordering of supplies to the impatient Miss Corny, stammering that 'I have not been accustomed to it; but I must learn' (147). She is even uncertain about what she does know, crying 'I don't think I know anything about housekeeping' (147), and defers continually to her husband as 'her loving protector' (148), with the result that, a year on, Isabel still has '[h]er impulses...checked, her wishes frustrated, her actions tacitly condemned by the imperiously-willed Miss Carlyle...she was in a state of galling subjection in her own house' (167). Ever wishing to please, ever conscious of her debt to her husband, Isabel is 'completely inexperienced...unfit to battle with the world, unfit to battle with Miss Carlyle' (168). She allows herself to be bullied by Carlyle's sister as she was once bullied in private by Lady Mount Severn, and childlike, she accepts her role and even allows Miss Corny to separate her from her children when convalescent. Had they accompanied her, Isabel might never have revived



her attraction to Levison, and she might have achieved an identity and an authority which permitted her to see the truth of her husband's relationship with Barbara. Ironically, it is as a mother that Isabel attempts to forge an identity, assuring Miss Corny that 'I am a competent judge of what is necessary for my own children' (259), but her confidence is destroyed because she then feels 'pitied by her own servants' (260).

In the eyes of her husband, until she elopes with Levison, Lady Isabel remains a child. He misreads her despair when she suspects that he has had a late-night assignation with Barbara, and calls her '[y]ou foolish child' (276). It is Isabel's loyal servant, Joyce, whom Wood uses to explain her mistress's total failure to achieve an identity as a grown woman, as a wife, and as a mother. Joyce accuses Miss Corny of driving Isabel away, 'you have made her life a misery' (279) she states, and questioned by Carlyle, she continues,

I have longed to say it to you many a hundred times, sir...[s]ince the very night Lady Isabel came here, your wife, she has been taunted with the cost she brought to East Lynne and to you. If she wanted but the simplest thing, she was forbidden to have it, and told she was bringing her husband to poverty... she wished for a new dress, and your cruel words, ma'am, forbade her having it. She ordered a new frock for Miss Isabel, and you countermanded it... I have seen her, ma'am, come away from your reproaches with the tears in her eyes, and her hands meekly clasped upon her bosom...driven to desperation...'

(280)

Once Isabel has left her husband and children, and by eloping 'dishonoured [this] house' (282), Wood shows her readers that such actions will always result in total estrangement from society, and an abandonment of her position and identity as a woman. Wood emphasizes that she has 'sacrificed husband, children, reputation, home, all that makes life of value to a woman' (283). For Wood, a woman's identity is totally bound up with her position as a wife, and by 'forfeit[ing] her duty to God' as wife and mother, any woman destroys herself. From this point, even before she adopts her elaborate disguise in order to return to her children, Isabel begins to lose her physical identification as Isabel Vane/Carlyle: 'she was looking like the ghost of her former self...misery marks the

countenance worse than sickness...' (284). Wood portrays her as incurably ill, corrupted physically and emotionally by her actions: 'her face was white and worn, her hands were thin, her eyes were sunken and surrounded by a black circle: care was digging caves for them' (284). Wood emphasizes that the details of Isabel's appearance result not from physical illness, but that 'they were the effect of her wretched mind and heart' (284). The announcement of Carlyle's divorce from her is phrased as though it is Isabel's death announcement, '[i]t was over, then. And all claim to the name of Carlyle had been forfeited by the Lady Isabel for ever' (285). Isabel now has no identity, not even that which she had tenuously gained as a result of marriage. Levison is not prepared to marry her, and her child by him is destined only to '[an] inheritance of sin and shame' (292). That child, born of a sinful union resulting from her 'jealous anger towards [her] husband' (293) is killed off by Wood, in a gesture which denies it an identity but also prevents Isabel from gaining one herself as its mother<sup>15</sup>. After Isabel's elopement Carlyle had expunged her name from the family, instructing that their daughter Isabel should in future be known by her second name. Lady Isabel is 'not dead', but '[w]orse than that' (281), alive but stripped of an identity. For Wood's Young Adult readers, the fates of Isabel's children – one renamed, one illegitimate, unnamed and violently dead, one dying a prolonged death – are a direct result of their mother's behaviour. In an age which elevated the child to cult status, Wood was presenting girls with a terrifying social warning: nothing should ever deflect them from aspiring to perfect motherhood. If it did, the consequences for perpetrator and victim alike would be fatal.

Wood now elaborates a false identity for her heroine, as part of her penitential journey back to Carlyle and her children, a journey undertaken both physically and morally. The railway accident which disfigures Isabel, leads to reports of her death, and kills her illegitimate child, acts both as a means of explaining the change in her appearance and, on a psychological level, inflicting a physical representation of the damage her identity as wife and mother has suffered as a result of her abandoning her duty. Wood's Young Adult girl readers could be in no doubt that the wages of sin were indeed death. Death is Isabel's only route to redemption, and physically ill at the news of Carlyle's marriage to Barbara, and constantly in fear of revealing her past, '[s]he did not pray to die; but she

did wish that death might come to her' (396). Isabel buries her original physical identity in what she sees as her duty to her children, and resolves 'to take up her cross' (398). Returning to East Lynne as governess to her own children, heavily disguised and ravaged by remorse, Isabel faces the harrowing death of William, her first-born son, slowly dying from the minute she re-enters the household. Her passion for Carlyle reignited by her return, Isabel is consigned by Wood to facing the error of her ways, 'as our conduct is, so will our happiness or misery be' (428). She also subjects Isabel to others' (unknowing) criticism of her actions, and, through Barbara's depressed chronic invalid mother, to an assessment of married life that carries a dreadful warning to her young readers:

Sorrow...comes all too frequently from ill doing: but the worst is, that the consequences of this wrong doing fall upon the innocent as well as upon the guilty. A husband's errors will involve his innocent wife; the sins of the parents will fall upon their children; children will break the hearts of their parents.

(428)

For Isabel, with the loss of her physical married identity as Isabel Carlyle, and her pre-marriage identity as Isabel Vane, the assumption of her false new identity as Madame Vine strips her of life itself: '[s]he longed... to be unknown, obscure, totally unrecognized by all...It was over. Lady Isabel Vane was as one forgotten.' (327). It is important for Wood to show her Young Adult readers that behaviour such as Isabel's can only be followed by social (and personal) nonentity, that abandoning marital and motherly duty is a forfeiture of the right to identity. But Wood has also shown her readers that Isabel had never achieved that specific identity sought by adolescents, an identity distinct from that of child and adult. Without that Isabel could never have achieved a mature, adult identity. Wood encourages her young readers to be aware that they should make no such mistake, but rather adopt a greater form of independence, as has Barbara through her active pursuit of the truth behind the Hallijohn murder and her brother's implication.

Despite her marriage, her elopement and her illegitimate child, Isabel is still as uncertain about relationships as a child, though now within the body of a prematurely aged woman.

Her outward appearance makes her ‘...the oddest-looking person: [she] wears spectacles, caps, enormous bonnets, and has a great scar on her mouth and chin; and though she can’t be more than thirty, her hair is grey: she is also slightly lame’ (398) writes Barbara Carlyle’s correspondent recommending her. Wood herself turns once more to address her readers directly to emphasize the physical loss of Isabel’s former identity:

Look at the governess, reader, and see whether you know her. You will say No. But you do, for it is Lady Isabel Vane...how strangely she is altered!... what the accident left undone, grief and remorse accomplished. She limps slightly as she walks, and stoops...[a] scar extends from her chin above her mouth, completely changing the character of the lower part of her face, some of her teeth are missing, so that she speaks with a lisp, and the sober bands of her grey hair – it is nearly silver – are confined under a large and close cap.

(388)

Those are changes, Wood tells us, caused by the trauma of the railway accident, and that itself is part of her punishment for her actions. However Isabel herself, ostensibly to conceal her old identity, but we feel psychologically to expunge her former self,

...tries to make the change greater, that the chance of being recognised may be at an end, for which reason she wears great disfiguring green spectacles...going round the eyes, and a broad band of grey velvet coming down low upon her forehead. Her dress, too, is equally disfiguring...frightful ‘loose jackets’...her bonnet actually shaded her face; and she was never seen out of doors without a thick veil.

(389)

Wood’s use of the word ‘disfiguring’ is significant: it refers to the inelegance of her appearance, but more significantly it has *dis*-figured Isabel, removed her identity from her. In contrast, when Isabel meets her again, Barbara looks ‘not a day older than when Lady Isabel had first seen her at the church-yard gates’, and ‘her blue eyes sparkled, her light hair was rich and abundant’ (404), a fair-haired angel in the house, who has vowed to Carlyle to keep her marriage vows ‘[a]lways: in the spirit and in the letter: until death...’ (384).<sup>16</sup> Wood’s description of Barbara, fair-haired and in blue, might remind her readers of images of the Virgin, ‘[h]er evening dress...of pale sky blue, - no other colour suited Barbara so well...- and on her fair neck was a gold chain, and on her arms

were gold bracelets. Her pretty features were attractive as ever... A contrast, her hair to that of the worn woman opposite her' (404). We may recall that Barbara is actually older than Isabel, yet has retained her youthful identity despite marriage and childbirth. We may also compare Barbara's current appearance with Isabel's youthful description:

A light, graceful, girlish form, a face of surpassing beauty, beauty that is rarely seen, save from the imagination of a painter, dark shining curls falling on her neck and shoulders smooth as a child's, fair delicate arms decorated with pearls, and a flowing dress of costly white lace...the rich damask of the delicate cheek...the luxuriant falling hair...the sweet expression of the soft dark eyes...a sad sorrowful look.

(11)

With her comparison of the ravaged Isabel with the radiant and saintly Barbara, whose has conquered her teenage passion and jealousy as Isabel has/could not, Wood draws our attention back to the eighteen-year-old Isabel. We note that Isabel and Barbara are opposites, and in contrast to Barbara's gold and blue, Isabel we recall as black and white, dark-haired, dark-eyed, ominously (for the Victorian reader well-attuned to visual clues) wearing pearls – considered unlucky – and already wearing 'a sad and sorrowful look'<sup>17</sup>. Isabel's black and white identity has been muted and transmuted, mixed together as her life has been, to grey. Wood's readers are reminded visually as well as intellectually of the consequences of Isabel's actions, and of the destruction of identity to which her rash, immature behaviour has led.

Already alienated from her familial position by her perception of her husband's relationships with her, and with Barbara, and by society because of her actions, Isabel becomes the ultimate alien, and finally loses her identity totally through her death. Wood's image of Isabel 'fading' (562) is used to convey both her health worsening and an actual fading, as though her heroine can be seen less and less distinctly, 'wasting away day by day' (562). However, through her heartbroken reaction to her child's irrevocable descent into death, and her realisation of a previously undiscovered intensity of love for Carlyle, Isabel is finally re-accorded a family identity through the act of dying. Recognized at last by her maid and thence by her husband, she can finally make her

peace with him and achieve the relationship Wood promotes as the wifely ideal, not merely 'esteem, admiration, affection' but 'that mysterious passion...love' (590). In recognition, Carlyle acknowledges their former relationship, as he 'laid her down and suffered his lips to rest upon hers. 'Until eternity,' he whispered' (617). Isabel has expiated her sin, and expects to rejoin her dead child and await her husband in heaven, as '[her] sin will be remembered no more there' (617). Before God her identity will be fully restored.

### **7.8 Is *East Lynne* a Young Adult novel?**

We have seen that in *East Lynne* Ellen Wood foregrounds many of the topics identified by twenty-first-century theorists as key identifiers of the Young Adult novel, and that she places two vividly drawn young female protagonists as central characters. In choosing the sensation novel as the vehicle for her story, Wood was able to provide her readers with numerous choices – both in deduction (of the crime) and in moral decision – while investigating Victorian bourgeois anxieties around societal expectation. The serialization of novels in magazines (and both *East Lynne*, in 1860-61, and *Lady Audley's Secret*, in 1861-62, first appeared in this way) added an extra element of suspense for readers, allowing them to dwell on the possible implications of each cliff-hanging episode. Paralleling the uncertainties which unsettled Victorians generally in a rapidly changing society, Young Adult girls also faced the uncertainties of their future, and vicariously, through their reading, might challenge assumptions and test their decision-making skills in preparation for the real life situations which Henry James called 'the mysteries which are at our own doors' (*Notes and Reviews*, 1921:110). James, like Edward Salmon, was convinced that 'our sisters and our daughters may learn from these works' (110). Sensation novels such as *East Lynne* and *Lady Audley's Secret*, whose outcomes punished evil, could offer their readers not merely conduct guidance, but also a direct intellectual involvement with the processes of decision making which could be used to ensure a morally correct future.

Approaching the close of her novel Wood again speaks directly to her readers, forcing them to consider what their actions would have been in circumstances similar to those

which Isabel Vane/Carlyle/Vine found herself. She challenges them: ‘are you quite sure that you would not have done the same, under the facility and the temptation?’ (590), and dismisses moralizing, ‘it is impossible to drive out human passions from the human heart’ (590), recognizing that ‘[i]f we all did just what we ‘ought’, this lower world would be worth living in’ (591). Wood was aware that her message would be read by a wider range of readers than ever before, an audience increased by advancing literacy, by cheaper publications produced by an ever widening publishing world, and by serialization in popular journals. Defined by one of its major authors, Wilkie Collins (in ‘The Unknown Public’, 1863:186), as a ‘combination of fierce melodrama and meek domestic sentiment’, the sensation novel was aimed at, and read by all classes. For Wood however, it was particularly the ‘young lady’ (198) to whom she addressed *East Lynne*, part of that post-adolescent, pre-marriage audience of Young Adult girls. In *Lady Audley’s Secret*, Mary Braddon addresses her text equally directly to her audience, her first page repeatedly emphasizing her readers’ vicarious presence in the places and events she will describe. Describing Audley Court, Braddon draws her readers’ eyes to the scene, and uses ‘you’ in lines 2, 4, 5, 10 and 11. As I shall show in the next section of my chapter, from the outset she works subtly to engage her readers with her principal characters, the eighteen-year-old Alicia, and her stepmother, Lady Audley.

### **7.9 *Lady Audley’s Secret*: ‘the natural sentiment of English girls’?**

Mrs Oliphant, castigating sensation novels, and especially those written by women, in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* in 1867, identifies girls as a major audience for the genre. She writes, ‘this intense appreciation of flesh and blood, this eagerness of physical sensation, is represented as the natural sentiment of English girls, and is offered to them not only as the portrait of their own state of mind, but as their amusement and mental food’ (259).

Oliphant’s criticism was largely directed at Mary Braddon. Satisfying the desire for fiction which reflected the concerns of an increasingly industrial, technological, urban and intellectually bourgeois society, Braddon and Wood became the two top-selling authors in the second half of the nineteenth century. While Braddon is listed by Salmon

as a favourite author of girls from eleven to nineteen, we are not told which of her titles were popular with them. As, like *East Lynne*, *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) achieved enormous success immediately after its publication, it is likely to have been widely read by those girls who were surveyed, and therefore interesting briefly to consider whether it also exhibits those key identifiers of Young Adult fiction.<sup>18</sup> Accusing Braddon of creating a 'very unnatural' heroine, and being too familiar with working-class life and masculine pursuits, the critic W. Fraser Rae nevertheless testified to the range of her readers. Writing in 1865, he states that '[s]he may boast...of having temporarily succeeded in making the literature of the Kitchen the favourite reading of the Drawing Room' (1865:104-105).<sup>19</sup>

The plot of *Lady Audley's Secret* concerns Lucy Graham, governess to the doctor's daughters, whose exquisite beauty and goodness enchant the middle-aged widower Sir Michael Audley. Once married to her doting husband, Lady Audley supplants Alicia, his eighteen-year-old daughter, as mistress of the household, and Alicia, resentful of her and rather hot-headed, spurns other suitors but falls increasingly in love with her cousin, Robert Audley, a lawyer, who is visiting Audley Court with his friend George Talboys. Talboys has just returned from Australia, whither he had gone three years earlier to make a fortune for his wife, Helen, née Maldon, and their child. However on his return he discovers that his wife has recently died, and their son is now in the charge of her drunken father. Robert is devoted to his friend, and when Talboys disappears suddenly from Audley Court, apparently intending to return to Australia, Robert is suspicious and investigates the disappearance.

In the course of his investigation Robert discovers that Lady Audley is in fact Talboys' wife, that she had contrived that the death from consumption of another woman should be recorded as her own, and that, abandoning her son, she should start a new life as Lucy Graham. Talboys' unexpected return, and his visit to Audley Court, where he recognizes his wife, now bigamously married, threatens an end to her pampered existence, and she attacks him near a well, down which he falls, apparently dead. Robert gradually uncovers the extensive web of deception Helen Maldon/Talboys/Lucy Graham/Lady



Audley has woven, and eventually warns her that he is aware of her past and what has happened to her first husband. She then attempts, unsuccessfully, to murder Robert. Faced by him with her actions, she claims inherited madness, and she is incarcerated in a Belgian establishment for the (rich) insane. Talboys reappears, having survived the fall into the well but having then decided to leave his past behind him and go to America.

Robert Audley's relationship with George Talboys, with Alicia Audley and with Clara, George's sister, forms an additional aspect in Braddon's plotting and characterization. Robert is drawn to Clara (whom he has not met before his friend's 'death') because of her similarity to his friend, and marries her once he has completed his investigation, just after her brother's return. They then set up home together, Robert, Clara, and George, together with George (and Helen/Lucy/Lady Audley's) son, Georgey, and eventually Robert and Clara's own baby. Here they are visited by Sir Michael (widowed within the year by the death of his 'wife'), by Alicia and by Alicia's long-time, but previously spurned, suitor.

Like Wood's plot, Braddon's actively relies on several of the technological changes which so deeply affected and unsettled society in the mid-nineteenth century, and which drove the development of sensation fiction. In *East Lynne* it is a catastrophic railway accident which allows Wood to create a situation in which Lady Isabel can return secretly to expiate her sins. Braddon however makes frequent use of the regular rail services which were in place by the 1860s to allow her characters to make secretive, swift journeys which in Lady's Audley's case attempt to create alibis for her criminal actions or plot the removal of those who may discover her secret. For Braddon's Robert Audley, the train permits him to undertake his investigations speedily and discretely. Each author also makes use of the telegraph which allows their characters to gain information or give instructions privately. Using such modern means to pursue their ends, the characters of Braddon's novel inhabit a world very familiar to many of her readers, young or old, perhaps even more familiar than that of *East Lynne*. However, despite the Hallijohn murder forming a significant sub-plot within Wood's text, it is the moral and social messages conveyed through Isabel Vane/Carlyle/Vine and Barbara Hare which dominate

her novel. Braddon's is more overtly a detective story, the action revolving totally around gradual revelation of the cause of the mysterious disappearance of George Talboys.

It is clear from the brief outline of the story given above that identity (selfhood) – a key identifier of fiction for Young Adults – is a major subject in the novel. The murders which Braddon's protagonist attempts arise from her fear of others discovering the changes of identity which she has made in order to facilitate her move up the social scale: from impoverished wife, to respectable young governess to wife to a prosperous baronet. For some of the Young Adult girls reading the novel, such a move, from an occupation to which the better educated but impoverished girls might aspire, to a social position about which all girls might dream, would offer great interest and inspiration. Braddon does not openly reveal the detail of her plot, instead scattering careful clues so that her readers themselves, like her hero, Robert Audley, may investigate the disappearance of Talboys through the accumulation of scraps of evidence. As a result her young readers would only gradually discover that Lucy Graham's new social position has been acquired in such an immoral and criminal manner. They would be first drawn into the account of the apparently laudable and justifiable rise of a beautiful and virtuous young woman, but then horrified by uncovering the lengths to which she went to achieve her goal. Braddon's readers are taught to follow clues, and to make choices, not merely about the likely outcomes in the plot, but about their own lives. In a rapidly changing world, exemplified by the railway and the telegraph, such skills would be particularly valuable to the novel's audience, and especially to its Young Adult girl readers.

Braddon conveys a terrible warning to her Young Adult girl readers, that such a calculating and callous determination to escape one's past, to better oneself at any cost, can only result in social alienation such as the madness and incarceration of Helen/Lucy/Lady Audley, and then death. Far from achieving a Young Adult girl reader's desire – a lasting adult identity – Braddon warns that behaviour such as this eventually strips from the individual any claim to social or psychological integrity. Like Isabel Vane/Carlyle/Vine, Lady Audley has abandoned husband and child, and entered

into an immoral or illegal relationship with another man, but unlike Wood's heroine who uses a changed identity to attempt to return secretly to her family in a lower social position, Lady Audley changes her identity to aggrandize herself and avoid any return to her commitments as a wife and mother.

Lucy Graham/Lady Audley (Braddon's heroine has already left Helen Maldon/Talboys behind by the start of the novel) is quite literally portrayed within the text, in repeated, lengthy graphic descriptions and as an actual portrait. Images to which reference is made in the text or the notes are to be found in Appendix 3:314-316. In Lady Audley's public face, Braddon constantly draws our attention to her innocence and golden aura, 'the tender fascination of those soft and melting blue eyes, the graceful beauty of her slender throat and drooping head, with its wealth of showering flaxen curls; the low music of that gentle voice' (2003:48). Braddon's descriptions of Lady Audley's hair, 'soft and feathery, always floating away from her face, and making a pale halo round her head when the sunlight shone through them' (49), resembles the heroines of conventional Victorian genre painting: sentimental images of domestic goddesses. Braddon repeats the image of the innocent, blue-eyed, golden-haired, childish, doll-like appearance of Lady Audley throughout the novel. She is 'radiant.....her pretty little rosebud of a mouth... a childish, babyfied little creature' (167-8). She possesses 'bright young beauty...childish innocence of her expression...wax-doll beauty' (279), has a 'fairy-like bonnet' (94) and uses 'fairy-like' writing paper (100), and 'fairy-like' embroidery scissors (113). Helen Talboys' choice of name, 'Lucy', reflects her wish to show herself as a beautiful, bright, light-giving young woman, but as Braddon's readers uncovered the clues to her dreadful actions, they might increasingly have seen the name as a diminutive for Lucifer, apparently so filled with grace and light but falling from grace to become as satanic as her namesake. The choice of 'Graham' as a surname leads us to a truer assessment of her inner self, the grey resulting from mixing an outwardly innocent appearance with an inner psychological and moral blackness. For the watchful reader, a clue might be taken early in the novel from Lucy's response to Sir Michael's proposal of marriage,

Beyond her agitation and her passionate vehemence, there was an undefined something in her manner which filled the baronet with a vague alarm. She was still on the ground at

his feet, crouching rather than kneeling, her thin white dress clinging about her, her pale hair streaming over her shoulders, her great blue eyes glittering in the dusk, and her hands clutching at the black ribbon about her throat, as if it had been strangling her.

‘Don’t ask too much of me,’ she kept repeating; ‘I have been selfish from my babyhood’...

‘But is there anyone else whom you love?’

She laughed aloud at his question. ‘I do not love anyone in the world,’ she answered.

(52)

The ribbon is in effect strangling her, for we discover that it holds her wedding ring, symbolic of the undissolved marriage to George Talboys. The image of Lady Audley, unmasked as a bigamist, a would-be murderess and a madwoman towards the novel’s end, recalls readers to this scene, and to the portrait hidden in her room, itself used designedly by Braddon as an intertextual reference to the women portrayed in later Pre-Raphaelite art, no longer a symbol of innocence, but less realistic, more powerful, sensuous, often evil.<sup>20</sup> Having already signalled the carefully concealed inner character, Braddon leaves her readers with a disturbed and dangerous image of a young woman, far removed from the socially desirable ‘angel in the house’.

Braddon openly reveals Lady Audley’s true character to her readers through her description of her portrait. Robert Audley and George Talboys discover it, covered with a cloth in Lady Audley’s extravagantly Gothic chamber, reminiscent of Radcliffe’s description in *The Romance of the Forest* (156-157). Braddon draws the attention of her readers to the difference between the public and the private face, the domestic goddess of Victorian art, portrayed using the realist technique advocated by Ruskin, and the archetypal Pre-Raphaelite woman. ‘No one but a pre-Raphaelite would have so exaggerated every attribute of that delicate face as to give a lurid lightness to the blonde complexion, and a strange, sinister light to the deep blue eyes’ (107), Braddon writes, ‘[n]o one but a pre-Raphaelite could have given to that pretty pouting mouth that hard and almost wicked look it had in the portrait’ (107). In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), Oscar Wilde would use a portrait to take from the eponymous hero of his novel the visible evidence of his dissolute life. Images from narrative and Pre-Raphaelite art

appear in Appendix 3:312-316, and an illustration from the 1863 *London Magazine* serialization of the novel on page 322.

Once again, it is likely that the Victorian reader, familiar with magazine reproductions of art, with narrative art and the symbolism employed by artists, would have recognised that ‘by their influence [they] brought out new lines and new expressions never seen in it before’ (107) which reveal the underlying immorality of Lady Audley’s character. It shows the ‘beautiful fiend’ (107), her appearance not as she presents herself to the world but, as her stepdaughter agrees, ‘she *could* look so’ (108). Alicia also comments that ‘I think that sometimes a painter is in a manner inspired, and able to see, through the normal expression of the face, another expression that is equally a part of it, though not to be perceived by common eyes’ (108). Braddon likens Lady Audley’s appearance to women in Pre-Raphaelite art to refer her readers specifically to its images of transgressive heroines who defied gender expectations, such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s *Bocca Baciata* (*The Kissed Mouth*) (1859), or Edward Burne-Jones’s *Sidonia von Bork* (1860). Like them, Lady Audley has tried to avoid the societal expectations which were placed on women, a realisation that ‘my ultimate fate in life depended upon my marriage’ (359). Knowledge of those paintings could add extra clues to the reader’s anticipation of future events in the novel, as well as a possible past for the apparently irreproachable Lady Audley. Lady Audley tells her maid Phoebe that ‘with a bottle of hair-dye...and a pot of rouge, you’d be as good looking as I any day’ (95), but it is she, not Phoebe, who is presenting herself as something she is not. Braddon lards her text liberally with descriptive, visual clues to the true nature of her heroine. After Robert has accused her of Talboys’ murder, and revealed her as a bigamist, she dreams feverishly, ‘in the wild chaos of her brain’ (349), while the ‘pale halo’ of her hair becomes instead ‘loose, dishevelled masses’ (373), the wild hair of a madwoman, no longer concealing ‘the transformation’ (347) she has hitherto hidden beneath. ‘Henceforth’, her step-nephew tells her, ‘you must seem to me no longer a woman...I look upon you henceforth as the demoniac incarnation of some evil principle’ (354). Finally consigned to the madhouse, ‘[s]he plucked at the feathery golden curls as if she would have torn them from her head. It had served her so little after all, that gloriously glittering hair: that beautiful nimbus of

light...' (396). Lucy has indeed been revealed as Lucifer: her identity has transmuted irrevocably, and Braddon is concerned that her Young Adult girl readers should learn the terrible consequences of unwomanly behaviour.

We can also see other identifiers of the Young Adult novel in *Lady Audley's Secret*, though none permeates the text as thoroughly as that of identity and false identity. Romance indeed is not the major focus of the novel, though Alicia, at eighteen representative of some of the Young Adult girls reading the novel, endures an unrequited love for her cousin Robert, her feelings undoubtedly fuelled by her dislike of her stepmother. Marriage to Robert would be an agreeable means of leaving the stresses of the family home in which her authority has been supplanted. Robert, '[i]ndolent, handsome, and indifferent' (98) has affection for her only as a cousin, and is insensible to her love, and to her 'brunette beauty' (98), being, Braddon states, unable to distinguish between 'love or indigestion' (98). Alicia, impetuous, fiery but ultimately realistic about their relationship, despairs that Robert 'care[s] about as much for me as he would for a dog' (101), and while ferociously attacking her cousin for his selfish lack of interest in her, 'the young lady broke down altogether and burst into tears' (148).

Many of Braddon's young female readers might empathize readily with Alicia, for Robert, while undoubtedly caring for his young cousin as a cousin, is totally unaware that her passion, which Braddon terms 'her girlish liking' (72) is for him, '[s]uch a nice girl...' he murmurs 'thoughtfully', 'if only she didn't bounce!' (157). A girl of great spirit, and acerbic humour, Alicia thinks '[p]erhaps Robert might care for me, if I had inflammation of the lungs...He couldn't insult me by calling me a Bouncer then. Bouncers don't have inflammation of the lungs' (350). She is unaware that Robert's interest in her stepmother is anything other than a dilettante's languid attention to that 'wax-dollish young person, no older than Alicia herself' (72). However once her stepmother's behaviour is revealed to her, and she discovers that Robert loves his cousin 'more dearly than a brother ever loved a noble-hearted sister' (370), she realizes that she has overblown her own feelings for her cousin. 'I've been very foolish and wicked to feel

angry with you, because—' (370) she says, but, with the embarrassment typical of a girl harbouring a secret passion, cannot admit to him the reason for her anger.

Robert's own sexual orientation has been the subject of much twentieth- and twenty-first-century critical conjecture, for his love is for George Talboys. Robert wonders why, despite being his uncle's heir presumptive, and realizing that Alicia would 'do her best to keep me happy' (187), 'I...have grown so fond of the fellow...feel so lonely without him?' (187). Deprived of George, Robert discovers Clara Talboys, and transfers to her the love he felt for her brother. Clara is a substitute, we feel, never the first object of Robert's love, for he admits, 'it seems so d—d lonely to-night. If poor George were sitting opposite to me, or – even George's sister – she's so very like him...' (230). Even her handwriting is 'very like, very like' (231) his friend's, and he finds her 'very handsome... brown eyes, like George's' (219). Robert wishes his friend had 'died in my arms', so that 'I should have known his fate' (273), and his relationship with George is recognized by total strangers, '[I]f the two gents had been brothers...you, sir, couldn't have been more cut up when [you] missed the other' (417). Clara's attraction for Robert is her link to his lost love, George, and although he tells her in the end 'I love you, Clara...I shall love you for ever, whether you will or no' (441), it is George, not passion for each other which 'was always a bond of union between them' (440). Robert has admitted to George's father that 'your son was my very dear friend – dear to me for many reasons' (214). That George, once rediscovered, lives with them and his son, while not unremarkable to a Victorian readership accustomed to sentimental male to male attachments, raises the question of how many of Braddon's readership, especially those who were Young Adult females, would have been expected or allowed to understand this homoerotic strand within the novel.

Intergenerational issues, another key identifier of the Young Adult novel, are foregrounded in the increasingly hostile relationship between Alicia and her stepmother, but also represented in Mr Talboys, father to George and Clara, who admits his own 'inflexibility of character' (212) with regard to his children. He is an 'emotionless man' (210), with 'that unwavering obstinacy which no influence of love or pity had ever been

known to bend from its remorseless track' (205-206). Informed of George's disappearance and probable murder, he considers himself 'a man who was once his father' (213), dismisses it as 'a very clever trick...for the purpose of alarming me...and of ultimately obtaining my forgiveness' (213). Knowing his father's obduracy, George had 'never in his own person made any effort to soften his father's verdict. He knew his father well enough to know that his case was hopeless' (206). Mr Talboys has disowned his son for what he regards as an importunate marriage to Helen Maldon, but treats his daughter no less unkindly. When Clara, hearing Robert's news about George, displays emotion and drops her cotton reel, her father tells her, in a 'hard voice', '[s]it down Clara', repeating this, and adding 'and keep your cotton in your workbox' (211). Desperate to learn more about her brother's fate, she follows Robert when he leaves the Talboys house, and she tells him, 'I have grown up in an atmosphere of suppression...I have stifled and dwarfed the natural feelings of my heart...I have been allowed neither friends nor lovers...the only creature in this world who has ever loved me has been taken from it' (222-223). Young Adult readers might have encountered such an inflexible and heartless parent within their own experience, so that George's reunion with his son, and Clara's passionate support for, and ultimate marriage to, her brother's great friend, could offer some hope for the readers themselves.

Stepmothers are notorious in fairy tale, and even in 'realistic' literature, often wicked, and are portrayed in this way, Elizabeth Thiel asserts, so that they 'exemplif[y] the otherness that stands in opposition to the perfect mother and, by implication, is a threat to the domestic ideal' (2008:74). Stepmothers, an inevitable part of many families until death in childbirth became less common, frequent many Victorian novels, but few outside of fairy tale can be as murderous as Lady Audley. Alicia Audley feels that the arrival of a stepmother 'no older than Alicia herself' (72), who 'owned to twenty years of age, but it was hard to believe her more than seventeen' (90), has caused a rift between herself and her father. Angered by her father's inability to see beyond the 'soft little white hands, and big blue eyes with long lashes' to the 'cruel things [she does] with those slender white fingers', Alicia softens to his distress, saying 'I'm very sorry, papa...



though she has come between us, and robbed poor Alicia of the love of that dear generous heart' (136). Tellingly, Alicia's dogs distrust Lady Audley, something which prompts the girl to cry, '...I wish I could like her for your sake, but I can't, I can't, and no more can Cæsar...he would have flown at her throat and strangled her' (136-137). Sir Michael cannot accept that his daughter distrusts and dislikes his new wife, responding about her dog's reaction, but almost, we feel including his daughter in his threat that '[y]our dog shall be shot...if his vicious temper ever endangers Lucy' (137). Following this encounter, the relationship between Alicia and Lady Audley has no hope of improving for, accused by her stepmother of trying to oust her in Sir Michael's affections, Alicia, prophetically states that, 'nothing but your own act will ever deprive you of it' (137) and thereby 'entirely shut the door upon all intimacy between Lady Audley and herself' (137).

Alicia has ample cause for her resentment. She has 'reigned supreme in her father's house since her earliest childhood, and carried the keys... [she] deluded herself into the sincere belief that for the whole period she had been keeping house' (46). At the age of eighteen, when she might justifiably feel she had the experience to be charged with oversight of the housekeeping, the arrival of a stepmother means that 'Miss Alicia's day was over' (46). The housekeeper now demurs to Lady Audley, and Alicia 'set her face with a sulky determination against any intimacy between herself and the baronet's young wife' (46). Young Adult girl readers might be familiar with such a scenario, certainly from other novels, but possibly also from real life, and could sympathize with Alicia's 'prejudices and dislikes' (46). Jalland states that 'the high rates of mortality in the nineteenth-century produced high rates of widowed people' ((1996:230), and emphasizes the pressure a widower would be under to remarry provide 'sympathy and support' for him, and a stepmother for his children. The correspondence pages of girls' magazines provide evidence of the often difficult relationship which ensued between stepmother and stepdaughter.<sup>21</sup> They might themselves have been accused, like Alicia, of being 'spoilt', and experienced the sense that in the re-marriage of a father, they had received 'a cruel injury' (46). Such a relationship between widowed father and teenage daughter may be seen as a complex one, for the daughter, having taken on her mother's household role

may also aspire (subconsciously at least) to replace her dead mother in the marital sexual relationship.

Time does nothing to mend Alicia's situation, and the relationship settles into 'an armed neutrality' (305), in which Lady Audley 'could...laugh merrily at the young lady's ill-temper' but unlike her impetuous, passionate but 'frank, generous-hearted' (306) stepdaughter, 'would not make war' (305-306). But '[t]here can be no reconciliation where there is no open warfare' (306), and the distance between them becomes 'a great gulf impassable...from either side of the abyss' (306). As Robert uncovers more of her past, and the revelation of her secret becomes inevitable, Lady Audley has moved into 'hat[red]' (348) of her stepdaughter. Alicia sees Sir Michael 'gradually drawn across the gulf...until he stood ...upon the other side of the abyss, and looked coldly upon his only child across that widening chasm' (306). Because of her stepmother's insidious influence over him, Alicia's relationship has become little better than that of the Talboys with their father. It is likely that some of Braddon's young readers could empathize with Alicia's feelings, her resentment, hatred and sorrow at the situation, and could justify any similar feelings they might have about their own family relationships. Braddon then offers them hope, for once Sir Michael has been told Lady Audley's secret, and her stepmother is removed from the household, Alicia is able to resume her true familial position, partly daughter, partly pseudo-wife. With 'a tenderly earnest look of sorrow and anxiety' (368) she cries to Robert, '[d]o you think there is anything I would not do to lighten any sorrow of my father's? Do you think there is anything I would not suffer if my suffering could lighten his?' (368). For those of her Young Adult girl readers who seek it Braddon presents a resolution, a happy family ending to which any stepdaughter could aspire, with the removal of the woman who has so damaged intergenerational relationships.

### **7.10 Conclusions: Following the Clues**

Filled as they are with all the key identifiers of Young Adult fiction and populated by Young Adult female protagonists, it is little wonder therefore, that Ellen Wood's *East Lynne* and Elizabeth Braddon's fiction feature so prominently in Edward Salmon's analysis of 'What Girls Read'. We have also seen that the reading records made by girls

in the mid- to late nineteenth-century confirm that sensation novels such as these, the 'blockbusters' of their time, through the pattern of clue and detection, offered the opportunity for readers to reach their own conclusions, in preparation for the real life decisions they must make as adults. No longer were they didactically instructed about suitable behaviour for a young lady, but guided through the story to make the right choices. 'I myself will follow up the clue', (221) exclaims Braddon's Clara Talboys. Young Adult girl readers were swift to follow her example.

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<sup>1</sup> Butts references this from Johnson, S. (ed. J. Hayward) (1949) *Dr Johnson. Some Observations upon Life and Letters*, London: Zodiac Books, p26.

<sup>2</sup> Published in London by Arthur, Hall, Virtue & Co. (nd).

<sup>3</sup> Butts owns a copy of *Decision*, 'a Nelson edition of 1870, containing an elaborate book-plate from the 'Edinburgh Educational Institution for Young Ladies' to Miss J.Reid for the session 1870-1871, signed by David Pryde, M.A., Headmaster.' (Email correspondence 29/07/08 - 01/08/08). This may suggest that Hofland was by then was being selected *for* rather than *by* the young ladies.

<sup>4</sup> In a letter from Mary Brunton to William Balfour, 21 Apr 1815, included in Brunton (1819).

<sup>5</sup> In a letter to Mr Izett, quoted in her husband's 'A Memoir of Mary Brunton' (see above).

<sup>6</sup> A mock advertisement for "The Sensation Times, and Chronicle of Excitement" [sic] in Punch in 1863 is quoted in Hughes (1980:3).

<sup>7</sup> Matthew Grenby's introduction to *Popular Children's Literature* (2008) references I.J..Leng's 1968 report on children's borrowing habits in public libraries which reflected this adolescent female fascination with unravelling mysteries. Leng's research indicated that by the age of twelve girls had moved away from fairy tales and animal stories towards mysteries, whereas boys moved toward adventure stories.

<sup>8</sup> Kate Summerscale's account of the Road Hill House murder of 1860, *The Suspicions of Mr. Whicher* (2008) examines the events and evidence informing the investigation of a child murder in a middle-class household very like those portrayed in the novels of Collins, Wood and Braddon. Collins and Dickens used elements of the case in their subsequent work.

<sup>9</sup> *Cool Reads for Cool Teens* at [www.englishbiz.co.uk](http://www.englishbiz.co.uk) lists all four novels: *Jane Eyre* (1847), Rosoff, M (2004) *How I Live Now*, Pullman, P. (2001) *His Dark Materials* and Haddon, M.(2003) *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*, as well as Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847).

<sup>10</sup> *Quarterly Review*, v. 113, no. 226 (1863-Apr), pp 482-514.

<sup>11</sup> Patsy Stoneham's monograph, *Brontë Transformations: The Cultural Dissemination of 'Jane Eyre' and 'Wuthering Heights'* (1996) examines this phenomenon in depth.

<sup>12</sup> A bookplate (reproduced in Appendix2:293) pasted into a copy of the novel (published by The Walter Scott Publishing Co., Ltd.) awarded as a prize in Birmingham states:

Severn Street Class XIV.  
Afternoon Bible Class  
For the year ending 1905  
Presented  
To  
H. Green.

Another similar copy, awarded in Reading, reads:

Cumberland Road Primitive Methodist P.S.A. Society  
First Session  
First Attendance Prize  
Awarded to Miss F Freemantle  
July 8th, 1906.

<sup>13</sup> Mitchell's introduction to *East Lynne* (1984) notes that *East Lynne* was well reviewed in the *Daily News*, the *Saturday Review* and many other newspapers. Samuel Lucas, writing in *The Times* on March 25<sup>th</sup> 1862, considered it had 'the indispensable requirement which is the rude test of the merits of any work of fiction ... *East Lynne* is found by all its readers to be highly *entertaining*' [sic]' (1984:vii).

<sup>14</sup> For a comprehensive survey of these see Nicolas Powell's study of the painting and its influence, *Fuseli: The Nightmare* (1973).

<sup>15</sup> The cult of the child within Victorian literature and art has been extensively examined over the last sixty years. Tamara S. Wagner's essay '“We have orphans [...] in stock” : Crime and Consumption of Sensational Children', in Denisoff (2008) pp201-215 consider the subject in some detail.

<sup>16</sup> The term 'Angel in the House' comes from the title of an enormously long and enormously popular narrative poem by Coventry Patmore, published in 1854, but revised until 1862, in which he portrays his angel-wife as a model for all women. It expressed something which became the bourgeois Victorian ideal for a wife. In it the wife is totally dedicated to her husband, a slave to him in every way, for example: 'Man must be pleased; but him to please  
Is woman's pleasure;'  
(from Canto IX, Preludes I: The Wife's Tragedy).

<sup>17</sup> See notes on Victorian Narrative Art in Appendix 3:325-329.

<sup>18</sup> By 1899 the *Daily Telegraph* rated it one of its '100 Best Novels in the World' (cited by Natalie M. Houston in her introduction to *Lady Audley's Secret*, 2003). The list appears in Appendix 1:291-293.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Houston's introduction to *Lady Audley's Secret* (2003).

<sup>20</sup> Images appear in Appendix 3:313-314.

<sup>21</sup> *The Girls' Own Paper* answers 'Queenie's' concerns on July 16<sup>th</sup> 1881 by encouraging her to live 'on good terms' with her stepmother, but acknowledges that: 'having begun so ill, the task will now be somewhat more difficult than it needed to have been' (quoted in Thiel, 2008:39).

## Part 2

### Young Adult Girls and their Reading: The texts

## Chapter 8

### ‘Simple, sweet and inexperienced...’

### Young Adult girls reading after 1870:

### Flora Shaw’s *Colonel Cheswick’s Campaign*

‘...girls who,  
while being perfectly simple, sweet, and  
inexperienced, show such fine breeding  
that we know they must run well forward  
in the race of life.’

*The Times*, review of Flora Louisa Shaw’s *Hector*  
October 18<sup>th</sup> 1882

#### 8.1 Late Victorian Messages

Few stronger expressions can be found in support of the socially educative value of novel reading for Young Adult girls than that contained in Thomas Hardy’s novel of 1891, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*. We may wonder whether Hardy’s assessment of working class girls’ understanding of the facts of life is accurate, but I suggest that fiction was contributory to their knowledge, if not as essential as Hardy, through Tess, alleges. After her seduction by her supposed cousin, Alec d’Urberville, the seventeen-year-old eponymous heroine berates her mother for neglecting to warn her of the societal and moral pitfalls facing a Young Adult girl:

‘O mother, my mother!’ cried the agonized girl, turning passionately upon her parent as if her poor heart would break. ‘How could I be expected to know? I was a child when I left this house four months ago. Why didn’t you tell me there was danger in men-folk? Why didn’t you warn me? Ladies know what to fend hands against, because they read novels that tell them of these tricks;

but I never had the chance o' learning in that way, and  
you did not help me!'

(1994:104)

In previous chapters in Part 2 we have seen reader response as an important factor in identifying those novels which were read and enjoyed by Young Adult girl readers. We have also seen that critical assessments contemporary with those novels have been divided about the suitability of fiction for this specific group of readers, as the opinions and behaviour of Young Adults girls were considered to be particularly influenced by the messages contained within novels. As the wider availability of education resulted in an ever-increasing female readership, a new genre of Young Adult novels developed which sought to be engaging and exciting to teenage girls but which firmly supported conservative Victorian social and ideological opinions.

Cultural Materialist theory emphasizes the active relationship between literature and its readers, and in Chapter 2 I examined Dollimore's assertion that individuals and groups subordinate to the dominant culture interact with the dominant forms, and may be 'challenging, modifying and even displacing them' (1985:6). The heroine of Flora Louisa Shaw's final novel, *Ailsa Cheswick*, challenges ideological concepts around the family, and male and female roles in an aggressively imperialist society. Her path to resolution exposes the modification she makes in order to reconcile her perception of a satisfying adulthood with late Victorian societal expectations of a Young Adult girl. In the course of the present chapter I shall show that Shaw's fiction output represents a progression from novels for children through to a Young Adult work addressing concerns peculiar to girls facing life choices without a mother to support them. In Shaw's novel *Colonel Cheswick's Campaign* (1886) there is an inadequate stepmother. Unlike Braddon, whose warning messages for young women in *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) were subtly contained within a sensation novel, Shaw is overtly creating a Young Adult novel, written for the ever-increasing market clearly demarcated by publishers and critics. In examining this late nineteenth-century phenomenon I shall consider the widening readership of young women created by the educational reforms which resulted from social and cultural changes in the last third of the nineteenth century. The presence of this flourishing young female readership encouraged the rise, and ensured the proliferation, of 'a literature of their own'.<sup>1</sup> I

shall show through a brief examination of her novels that Shaw was particularly concerned with the role of girls and young women, a concern which culminated in the issues she considered in *Colonel Cheswick's Campaign*.

## 8.2 'Legions of story books': Education, Ideology and Readership

One of the few twentieth-century critical surveys of children's literature which considers Flora Shaw's books is Gillian Avery's 1965 survey, *Nineteenth Century Children*, which she subtitles *Heroes and Heroines of English Children's Stories 1780-1900*. In the final paragraph of her introduction she acknowledges the publication of '[t]he legions of story books of the last three decades of the nineteenth century' (1965:8), and states that 'their names may still be dear to an older generation, and their authors better known', recognizing the enormous boom in publication of literature, and particularly fiction, which marked the second half of Victoria's reign. That a considerable proportion of this was for children was a direct result of the 1870 *Education Act*, in which W. E. Forster, vice-president of the Liberal government's education committee, ordained that, for the first time, a school should be placed within the reach of every English child under the age of thirteen. The initial goal of these 'Board' schools should be to remedy, at an early age, the widespread illiteracy amongst the working classes.

The 1880 *Education Act* (Mundella Act) extended this to compulsory education for all children under the age of ten, and publishers, ever alert to a market opportunity, saw that vast quantities of literature of all kinds would be necessary to meet the needs of the pupils. The *Public Libraries Act* of 1850 had allowed for the establishment of public reading facilities in larger urban areas, thereby extending to the working classes a facility already available to those able to pay to borrow books through circulating and subscription libraries. Publishers realized that the newly literate class, now encompassing readers from every social background, whose tastes might increasingly be for more realistically based fiction than provided by the material which had hitherto dominated publishers' lists, could emerge as a profitable source of revenue for purveyors of domestic fiction. Some novelists themselves however became perturbed that the demands associated with this new readership, and particularly the dramatic rise in numbers of literate young people resulting from



universal access to education, would result in an unwelcome and constraining categorization and censorship of their output.

In 1885 the novelist George Moore, whose championing of *Paul and Virginia* I discussed in Chapter 4, wrote in his essay *Literature at Nurse* of his concern at the influence which circulating libraries, particularly Mudies, had over the content of novels. His subtitle, *Circulating Morals*, indicates the new moral role which he sees librarians adopting in order to satisfy '[t]he British mamma ... determined that her daughter shall know nothing of life until she is married; at all events, that if she should learn anything, there should be no proof of her knowledge lying about the place – a book would be a proof' (1885:21). The only question these mothers are concerned with, he feels, is '[c]an my daughter of eighteen read this book?' a question which produces, he alleges, two 'irreconcilable things – art and young girls' (21). Elaborating his argument, Moore imagines librarians justifying their decisions by protesting that they 'cater for the masses, and the masses are the young unmarried women who are supposed to know but one side of life' (21).

Criticism of the stranglehold enforced on the content and format of new novels was not new. As early as 1854 the need for far greater numbers of cheap editions had been identified and recorded in the *Times*, but at that point serial publication of novels in periodicals had largely satisfied the needs of the reading public. By the 1880s however, with increased access to education for all, there was emerging both an ever more diverse readership, and a more concerted attack on the power of the proprietors of circulating libraries who saw themselves as custodians of the reading of 'the typical young lady of the period and her straight-laced mamma' (17). In 1884 Moore engaged in a protracted debate in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, blaming 'the appallingly low ebb' of English fiction on 'the circulating library [which] forbids discussion on [nature: ...religion and morals]' (Moore, 1976: 27-28). He alleges that:

The subtraction of these two important elements of life throws the reading of fiction into the hands of young girls and widows of sedentary habits; for them political questions have no interest, and it is by this final amputation that humanity becomes headless, trunkless, limbless, and is converted into the pulseless, non-vertebrate, jelly-fish sort of thing which, securely packed in tin-cornered boxes, is sent from the London

depot and scattered through the drawing rooms of the United Kingdom.

(28)

Moore extends his castigation of the circulating libraries to the publishers, who are browbeaten 'to issue their books in three volumes, thereby getting rid of all purchasers, and securing...an absolute dictatorship in library matters... for no book is reissued in a cheap form that has not been... a success at the libraries' (28). As I shall show in a later section, this certainly seems to have been the fate of Shaw's *Colonel Cheswick's Campaign*. Moore relates a conversation with the proprietor of a circulating library in which the latter refuses to circulate Moore's *A Modern Lover* because 'two ladies from the country wrote to me objecting to [a] scene... I must consult the wishes of my clients...I can accept no opinion except that of my customers' (30-31). Moore's conclusion is that 'the taste of two ladies in the country' now 'controls the destinies of English literature' (31).

In his essays Moore deplores this library 'monopoly' (28), which he considers 'makes of the English novel a kind of advanced school-book, a sort of guide to marriage and the drawing room' (32). If we reflect on my argument in earlier chapters, this is, of course, largely what conduct books were, and what Richardson sought to enliven by encasing the advice in spirited novels such as *Sir Charles Grandison*. Henry James, in his essay on *The Future of the Novel* in 1899, rehearsed and extended Moore's views on the development of a literature deemed suitable for young women and children, considering the topic from the point of view of novelists trammelled by the perceived restrictions on subject matter. Each author laments such censorship, considering that realistic depictions of experience are the means by which all readers can learn strategies to approach similar situations in their own lives. James confirms that the availability of education has produced 'girls in especial [who] live in a great measure by the immediate aid of the novel' (1956:31), while Moore writes of the desirability that 'the nineteenth century should possess a literature characteristic of its nervous, passionate life' (1976:22). Moore and James were not alone in their fears, and, as I shall show later in this section, advice on suitable reading for Young Adult girls proliferated in the second half of the century.

It is pertinent to my argument to look briefly at the rise of periodicals aimed specifically at Young Adult girls, as these were vehicles both for critical reviews of suitable reading for girls, and for the stories themselves. One of the longest lasting and most influential of these was *The Monthly Packet*, edited from its first issue in January 1851 until 1890 by the successful novelist Charlotte Yonge and thence until its demise in 1899 by Yonge in collaboration with Christabel Coleridge. Individual stories and the serialization of novels formed a large part of each issue, and many of Yonge's own novels for Young Adult girls had first appeared on its pages. In her preface to the first issue of *The Monthly Packet* Yonge had defined her intended readership as 'between the ages of fifteen and five-and-twenty', and her stated aim in founding the magazine had been a recognition that 'everyone forms their own character' between those ages, and therefore 'in some degree [as] a help to those who are thus forming it' (1851:1).

Beetham and Boardman (2001) trace the beginning of the rise in magazines for girls to the 1860s, with *The Young Ladies' Journal* and *The Young Englishwoman*, both begun in 1864, 'aimed at the young middle-class woman who could be any age between thirteen and twenty-five' (71). What identifies the new genre, they contend, is that these journals 'focus on the life of the girl and specifically female accomplishments' (71). They see a modification of the genre with the first publication of the *Girl's Own Paper* (1880), *Girl's Realm* (1898) and *Atalanta* (1887), 'aimed at the middle-class girl whose opportunities had widened considerably' (71), and view this as an acknowledgement by publishers of 'a time of life, girlhood, not envisaged a generation earlier' (71). *Atalanta* was edited by L.T. Meade, an author whose large and hugely popular fiction output was aimed at Young Adult girls, with subjects such as *Polly: A New Fashioned Girl* (1889), and *A Sweet Girl Graduate* (1891). Equally significant however in the 1880s and 1890s is the growing recognition of magazines such as *Girl's Best Friend* and *Sweethearts*, both started in 1898, intended for an audience of working-class girls and young women, an audience 'spotted a generation earlier' according to Beetham and Boardman (71) and then served by popular cheap journals such as *The Young Ladies of Great Britain* (1869) and *Wedding Belles* (1870). Unlike the titles for middle-class Young Adult girls, these cheaper titles 'focused on romance and sensationalism and were designed primarily for pleasure and not instruction' (71).

Whatever their station in life, Young Adult girl readers of these periodicals provided an eager audience for the 'legions of story books' now being marketed. These teenage novels of school and family life formed the material from which publishers constructed their own collections, variously advertised enticingly in terms such as 'Routledge's Young Lady's Library', 'Every Girl's Home Library', 'The Girls' Holiday Library' and 'The Schoolgirl Series'. To aid young readers in their selection from this growing body of available material, educationalists and critics reviewed new novels, and filled magazines and whole books with good advice. Charlotte Yonge was an author who, as we have seen, anticipated and filled the gap between young children's stories and adult novels, providing 'an unwonted element of chivalry ...happily grafted on the realism of contemporary English life'.<sup>2</sup> As such Yonge was well suited to judge the work of other writers for a similar audience, writers such as Flora Shaw. In 1887 she assembled *What Books to Lend and What to Give*, a small volume of advice for those involved in the selection and administration of parish and Board and Sunday school libraries, which suggested suitable titles under a variety of headings, encompassing the needs of readers of all ages.

It is within the category of 'Drawing Room Stories' that Yonge recommends Shaw's first novel, *Castle Blair*, one of sixty-six titles 'chosen for their unusual excellence', describing it as '[a] wild Irish story, very attractive and exciting' (1887:39). In her introduction to this list of 'Drawing Room Stories', Yonge considers the subject matter to be beyond the understanding of most parish library readers; she writes:

...they deal in general with a way of life,  
with pursuits, allusions, and temptations,  
so much out of the line of the ordinary  
clients of the parish library that we do not  
recommend them for that purpose, although  
they do no harm but decidedly good, so far  
as they are understood, and where readers of  
a superior degree are included, would be  
excellent.

(35)

The mention of readers of 'superior degree', it is to be feared, probably refers to social class rather than reading ability. Other books recommended include titles by Mrs. Molesworth, Mrs. Ewing, Mrs. Gatty, together with many of Yonge's own books and SPCK stories. Clearly Yonge is placing Shaw's first book on equal terms with

some of the most respected and loved authors available in late Victorian England. *Castle Blair*, being in Yonge's opinion 'wild...attractive and exciting', may have proved more accessible to 'ordinary clients of the parish library' than some of the other suggestions in this category. In her eleven-page general introduction to *What Books*, Charlotte Yonge expresses her wish to ensure that those books which children are lent to read, or given as prizes, should be of the highest quality. Yonge recognizes that:

Wholesome and amusing literature has become almost a necessity among the appliances of parish work. The power of reading leads, in most cases, to the craving for books. If good be not provided, evil will be only too easily found

([1])

In the same year Lily Watson wrote *What Shall I Read?*, published by the Sunday School Union. She was firmly convinced that 'one can hardly overrate the terrible effect that a bad novel will have upon the ardent imagination' (1887:46). She advises that readers should 'avoid novels that make passion the all-in-all of life' and '[n]ever read anything only for amusement, without any regard for the character of the tale' (53). Lucy Soulsby's *Stray Thoughts on Reading* (1898), dedicated to 'the girls of Oxford High School', has equally cautionary advice: '[i]f we get up from a novel, dissatisfied with that state of life to which we have been called, and inclined to pity ourselves, then we may be sure that such a novel is our poison, and should be laid aside' (1898:49). Possibly recognizing the likelihood that Young Adult girls will nevertheless read less suitable material, she instructs that readers should 'make a list of [books which every cultivated person should read] ...and resolve that, for every sensation novel we read, we will conscientiously go through one of those on our list before we open another of the sort we enjoy' (26-27). Within this statement, of course, Soulsby has acknowledged that we all may well enjoy better the less worthy books.

In Chapter 7 I discussed the critic Edward Salmon's initial recommendation of *East Lynne* as the most suitable novel for a young woman 'as soon as she has arrived at an age when she may find that life for her has unexpected dangers'.<sup>3</sup> Salmon of course removed that specific title from his subsequent book based on his periodical articles,

*Juvenile Literature As It Is* (1888), but he firmly retained his conviction that girls needed a literature of their ‘very own’ (1886:515, 1888:122). He quotes from one of the respondents to the reading survey amongst teenage girls from which he drew his conclusions. This ‘young lady’ he feels ‘fairly accurately expressed’ the ‘general feeling of English girls by stating that ‘Charlotte Yonge’s stories are pretty, and if they were not quite so goody-goody, would be very nice stories of home and everyday life’ (1888:28). She continues ‘[g]irls as a rule don’t care for Sunday-school twaddle; they like a good stirring story, with a plot and some incident and adventures...[t]hat is also, I am sure, why girls read so many novels of the commoner type – they have, as a rule, nothing else in any way interesting’ (29). It is Salmon’s assertion that adults should listen to these opinions rather than dictate what girls should read, as ‘they must open the eyes of parents to the real needs of our girls’ (31). Despite the wisdom of commentators such as Salmon, Moore and James, it seems that Shaw’s final novel, in common with the majority of contemporary fiction for Young Adult girls, more closely reflected the wishes of ‘the British mamma’ than the plea made by Hardy’s seventeen-year-old Tess.

### **8.3 Flora Shaw and her Intended Audience**

Flora Shaw, though now remembered, if at all, for her journalism, was, in the late 1870s and early 1880s, a popular writer of fiction for young people, whose work was published and translated in mainland Europe and the United States. A brief survey of the major events of her life reveals much about the formation of the ideologies which are as evident in her fiction as in her colonially-inspired journalism. Her work fell into several quite distinct phases, of which her writing for children was the first and briefest, encompassing only the nine years from 1877 to 1886. During this period she wrote merely five novels: *Castle Blair* (1877), *Hector* (1882), *Phyllis Browne* (1883), *A Sea Change* (1885) and *Colonel Cheswick’s Campaign* (1886). No lesser authority than Ruskin had befriended her, encouraged her to write *Castle Blair*, and praised it highly in *Fors Clavigera: Letters to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain* (1871-84), one of Ruskin’s many contributions to the education of the working classes. He considered the author’s talents to be equal to Maria Edgeworth’s, and to surpass those of Harriet Martineau. From writing fiction for the young, Shaw had then turned to reporting fact for an adult readership, and commenced a career in journalism which culminated in her appointment in 1892 as the first Editor in the new

Colonial department of *The Times*. This position held considerable covert political influence, and its occupation by a woman was remarkable. Equally unconventionally, Shaw had maintained her single status until the age of forty-nine, when she embarked on the final phase of her life, as wife to a colonial Governor General, Sir Frederick (later Lord) Lugard. Thence her literary talents were employed in producing substantial historio-cultural accounts of these colonies. Having returned to England in 1912, she helped found the War Refugees Committee during the First World War, her achievements for the dispossessed Belgians gaining her the award, in 1918, of Dame of the British Empire. A fuller account of Shaw's later life can be found in Carrington (2008).

Flora Louisa Shaw was born in 1852 into a family firmly entrenched in a socially advantaged, militaristic hierarchy, with an Anglo-Irish career soldier as father and a mother from a French diplomatic family. Family legend insisted that Shaw's great grandmother had refused to leave Paris during the Revolution, and displayed, according to Shaw's biographer her central belief that '[c]ourage ...should be the distinguishing trait of the nobility' (Bell, 1947:13. Shaw evidently believed this story and inherited the attitude, and this clearly informs her pervasive ideology of the 'gentleman', a constant theme in her writing, fiction and non-fiction, and one which is particularly at the core of her two earliest novels, *Castle Blair* and *Hector*.

Shaw's father, Major General George Shaw, was the second son of Sir Frederick Shaw, an eminent member of Dublin's gentry, and came from an impeccable lineage of Anglo-Irish landowners (the playwright, essayist and critic George Bernard Shaw was a distant cousin). Major Shaw was a career soldier, stationed for a considerable time at Woolwich, but his frequent absences on duty abroad made it necessary that his young family should spend long periods on their grandfather's estate in Ireland. This experience was to provide the geographical, political and social setting for Shaw's first book *Castle Blair* (1877), published when she was twenty-four. Prolonged residence with Sir Frederick provided Flora and her thirteen siblings with periods of idyllic childhood in which they were allowed great freedom, but during which the overtly paternalistic role of the Anglo-Irish landlord pervaded every aspect of life on the estate, and became a further influence in the formation of the ideologies as implicit in Shaw's fiction as her colonial journalism. Her biographer, Bell, comments

that Shaw's grandfather instilled in his young visitors, 'a high sense of the responsibility which belongs to the privileged, of the duty of generous service' (1947:12). Central to Shaw's theme of the 'gentleman', seen particularly in the characterization of Murtagh in *Castle Blair*, and her eponymous hero Hector, is a statement that was apparently made by Sir Frederick which Bell quotes: 'It's the privilege of a gentleman...to get the worst of any bargain throughout life' (12).

The young Shaw, therefore, was, from both maternal and paternal backgrounds, the recipient of ideologies ingrained in imperialism and privilege, elevated social positions which both families considered imposed a considerable degree of responsibility and required lifelong devotion to the perceived duty of a 'gentleman'. The role of girls and women was largely to support, foster and preserve this paternalistic ideology. As I shall show, Shaw's fiction features rather two-dimensional male characters who steadfastly promote imperialism, while her female characters more fully engage her girl readers, being livelier, and offering far more active support as plucky and resourceful daughters and sisters. To twenty-first-century eyes it may also appear surprising that such a pioneer of political journalism, who was deeply aware of the restrictions and inequalities her gender inflicted upon her, was nevertheless vehemently opposed to the movement for women's suffrage, believing that women should not be entitled to influence political decisions until such time as they were prepared and able to carry arms for their country.<sup>4</sup> This attitude however was in keeping with the imperialist constructions of gender, which sought to maintain the status quo in which women fulfilled their traditional roles by supporting and promoting the male perpetuation of the apparently unquestionably superior levels of civilization and justice which the British Empire offered its colonies. Imperialist women made no claims to equality of gender, and sought to shield their sex from the greater dangers and stresses which, in their perception, an active political or military life would exert, being content with their role as wives, mothers and backroom assistants - a 'tea and sympathy' support. Flora Shaw, as Colonial Editor of *The Times*, simultaneously defied convention, in her journalistic role, and encouraged it, by actively promoting imperialism with its rigid gender stereotyping. Her great grandmother's doctrine that women, though unable to fight, could at least die at their posts, appears to have endured the centuries, and further informed Shaw's ideology. Later in the present chapter my examination of *Colonel Cheswick's Campaign* will



show that Ailsa Cheswick's life as a Young Adult girl is initially totally focused on supporting her father's military responsibilities, by ensuring the smooth running of his household. Even when she faces the dilemmas and decisions associated with a developing romantic relationship, it is duty to the career of her soldier suitor which drives her actions.

While in Woolwich, Shaw had access not only to the Garrison Library but also to the series of lectures by eminent men which took place each winter. In 1869, as a sixteen-year-old new debutante, she attended her first lecture, given by John Ruskin, and entered into a friendship which provided intellectual stimulation, advice and support in both domestic and literary spheres. The importance of Ruskin's theories on a multiplicity of social, political and artistic subjects, which were becoming widely available to the general public through the publication of his lectures and letters of instruction to the working classes, was very considerable.<sup>5</sup> Public opinion was much influenced by his conviction that poverty at home could be remedied by harnessing the riches to be found in the colonies, a view expressed in the lecture given on December 14<sup>th</sup> 1869 at the Royal Institution, Woolwich, and espoused thereafter by Flora Shaw, who saw in it a further justification for the ideology inherited from her aristocratic imperialist ancestors.<sup>6</sup> She was confirmed in her support of Ruskin's theory by the poverty she had witnessed in Ireland (often made worse by the absentee landlords Murtagh criticizes so vehemently in *Castle Blair*) and the condition of the women and children she met when undertaking charitable works in the east end of London after she had left the family home in Woolwich. In *Phyllis Browne* (1883), which I shall briefly consider later in this chapter, Shaw again shows her concern about conditions for workers and their families, a concern born of the perceived paternalist responsibilities which were central to the ideologies of her class and background as much as to Ruskin's theories. This concern is also evident in a short story, 'The Rose of Black Boy Alley', published in the *Sunday Magazine* in 1883, and anthologized later that year in the American magazine, *Littell's Living Age*.

The evidence for the ideologies implicit in Flora Shaw's writing will be examined in greater detail within the discussion of her novels. It is clear, however, that her early life had considerable influence on the choice and treatment of the subjects of her fiction. Within these novels she expressed her belief in a paternalistic imperialism,

which accepted the responsibilities as much as the rights of the gentleman, as clearly as in her journalism. Female *child* characters such as Winnie (in *Castle Blair*) are concerned with supporting male protagonists and, like them, are represented as mistaken in supporting self-determination for the ‘lower’ classes, discovering instead that enlightened paternalism is preferable. In Shaw’s *Young Adult* female characters however, exemplified by the eponymous Phyllis Browne and Ailsa Cheswick (in *Colonel Cheswick’s Campaign*), we see that issues of identity and complex relationships become increasingly important to those young women. Shaw in these novels is writing for a post-pubertal female readership coming to terms with issues which underpin a young woman’s move into maturity. She therefore engages her readers with empathetic characters, and thereby offers inspiration and guidance for their private and personal lives as well as their future roles as wives and mothers to the active agents of imperialist ideology.

#### **8.4 The Publishing History of Flora Shaw’s Fiction**

In earlier chapters we have already seen the particular relevance of Reader Reception theory when discussing the reading of Young Adult girls, and the relationship between that audience and the fiction written and published with its concerns in mind. By briefly surveying the trends and forms of publication in the mid- to late Victorian literary world, it is possible to consider, in context, the popularity and importance of Flora Shaw’s fiction for children, and the development of publishers’ lists of titles specifically for girls between child and adult, such as Routledge’s ‘Young Lady’s Library’. Avery identifies the enormous and ever growing flood of stories with which Shaw’s had to compete when she completed her first novel in 1877. Having encouraged the writing of *Castle Blair*, Ruskin endorsed it enthusiastically once published, an endorsement which continued to be quoted by publishers of subsequent editions. By 1869, when Shaw first knew him, Ruskin had been revered both in popular and academic circles for more than thirty years as a formulator and critic of literary style, including style and content for children. Therefore this championing of her first novel, together with an equally influential recommendation by Charlotte Yonge, ensured that the acknowledged high quality of Shaw’s work remained in publishers’ minds when considering republication.

Darton (1932, 3<sup>rd</sup> revised edition 1999) considers the format of Victorian publication in general in some detail, but makes no mention of Shaw's work. As we saw earlier in this chapter, in the 1870s lengthier novels continued to be published in multiple volumes, and copies in the British Library show that *Castle Blair: A story of youthful days* was first published by Charles Kegan Paul in two volumes, continuing to be published by Kegan, Paul & Co. with further editions in 1878, 1879 and 1882. It had reached its eighth British edition in 1907 (published by George Routledge & Sons), changes in reading fashion having reduced its format to a single volume. Already by the 1880s there was a growing market for the publication of fiction in single volumes, cheaper, more easily portable and easier to read for the increasing number of railway travellers. Routledge had been one of the first to recognize the need for cheap, light (often sensational) 'railway novels' to sell in W.H. Smith's conveniently placed railway bookstalls.

When published in book form, *Hector*, *Phyllis Browne* and *A Sea Change* all first appeared as single volumes, but at 824 pages, *Colonel Cheswick's Campaign* was sufficiently long to warrant three volumes when published in the UK in 1886, a 'triple-decker'. Shaw had a new British publisher for this final novel, Longmans, Green & Co, but there is no evidence currently available to explain the reason for this change from her earlier publisher, Routledge. In America however, concurrent with Longman Green's edition, Shaw's American publisher, Roberts Brothers, marketed *Colonel Cheswick's Campaign* as a single 436-page volume. Shaw's final novel appears never to have been republished in Britain or the United States. According to catalogue records, only four copies remain in academic libraries in the UK, all being the British three-decker version; seven of the Roberts edition can be found in American academic libraries, and several more in public libraries throughout the US, though none exists in the Library of Congress. A single copy of the American edition remains in the Biblioteca del Gabinetto G. P. Vieusseux in Florence. Probably a few more survive in private possession.

Quite why Flora Shaw offered her first piece of fiction to Charles Kegan Paul is a mystery, although both her sometime neighbours George Meredith and R.L. Stevenson both were published by the firm. Howsam (1998), in her history of Kegan Paul makes no mention of Shaw, although her overview of the publishing policy in

the last thirty years of the nineteenth century throws interesting light on the condition of the publishing world into which Flora Shaw was placing her writing. Howsam (135) tabulates by genre the proportion of men to women whose work was being published: 53.8% of authors of novels were female, but this rose to 82.6% of the authors of books of juvenile interest; exactly what the latter category covered is not clear, and it may include both fiction and non-fiction. However, when overall totals are compared, (136), more than 80% of all authors on Kegan Paul's list were male, less than 20% female; Shaw, therefore, was entering into a male-dominated world. Howsam (108) confirms the boom in children's literature, but states that this led to the development of specialized publishers of this genre. Kegan Paul, with a general list, apparently found it difficult to compete with the specialists, and 'juvenilia' never accounted for more than 1% of their total production.

It is therefore not surprising that, although Kegan Paul continued to publish until the fourth edition (1882), by the eighth (1907), *Castle Blair* was being published by George Routledge, a company who were specifically targeting the fiction-reading public, and certainly Shaw's fourth novel, *A Sea Change*, was published in 1885 by George Routledge and Sons. It seems that of all five novels, only *Castle Blair* continued publication into the twentieth century in Britain, and the British Library catalogue indicates that there were only two further UK editions after the eighth in 1907. A 1929 republication by Oxford was possibly triggered by the author's death in that year, and a subsequent, if short-lived, reawakening of interest in her books. Following the obituary which appeared in *The Times* on January 28<sup>th</sup> 1929, in which no mention was made of Shaw's career as a novelist, a letter from Mrs [Louise] Creighton appeared which reproved the Editor for this omission, describing how the correspondent had been recommended to *Castle Blair* by Walter Pater (and 'his sisters'), that it was 'an admirable book', and 'a favourite with children'. Creighton supplied a preface to the 1929 Oxford republication. However although *Hector* is described by another correspondent as 'a treasured possession of mine', this was obviously not sufficient to encourage a new edition of that book. The only more recent edition of *Castle Blair* was that published in 1966 by Rupert Hart-Davis. This indicates a declining interest in Victorian subject matter by twentieth-century readers of children's novels (although Marryat, Stevenson, Sewell and others have never disappeared from the 'children's classics' school of publication on cheap paper with

lurid illustration). This makes the Hart-Davis edition all the more interesting, as the rationale behind the publication of the series in which it appeared, *The Keepsake Library*, is given on the dustwrapper, that it is ‘made up of books from the past which deserve to be better known by children of today’.<sup>7</sup> This publisher clearly took seriously the idea of introducing forgotten books to a new generation, as an attempt at a short, though not totally accurate, biography was made on the rear flyleaf, together with a historical background to the story’s setting, emphasizing the Irish interest in the light of the ensuing Troubles. It also provides, again slightly inaccurately, details of its original publication information. Ruskin’s recommendation continues to be quoted, almost a century after its first appearance. Quoted on the front flyleaf, Charlotte Yonge’s description of it no doubt further influenced Rupert Hart-Davis’ decision to include this in *The Keepsake Library*. There appears, however, to have followed no further reawakening of interest in Flora Shaw’s fiction. The last forty years have seen no further editions in the UK, other than the inclusion of the entire text in the 1985 *Masterworks of Children’s Literature* edited by the American, R.L. Wolff, jointly published in the UK and USA by Allen Lane.<sup>8</sup>

Shaw’s second book, *Hector: A Story for Young People* (1882), was published by George Bell and Sons, so it appears that she had changed publishers by this point. It is likely that this is because it was Bell who published *Aunt Judy’s Magazine*, for which, following the success of *Castle Blair*, Shaw had been commissioned by Scott Gatty, one of the editors, to write *Hector*. *Aunt Judy’s Magazine*, issued monthly, had begun publication in 1866, edited by Mrs. (Margaret) Gatty, herself a well known author. It took its title from the family nickname for her story-telling daughter, Juliana, who, as Mrs. Ewing, became one of the best loved of the Victorian children’s writers, publishing some of her stories first, in serial instalments in *Aunt Judy*, then as books, by Bell. In the middle years of the century there arose many such magazines, at a price to suit the ever-increasing numbers of newly literate households, providing material in the most popular genres.<sup>9</sup> The major authors wrote for them, whether, like Dickens and Thackeray, for an adult audience, or like Kingsley and MacDonald, for children. As Ellen Wood’s *East Lynne*, and Elizabeth Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* had appeared this way in the 1860s, so as the century progressed many more ‘classics’, which are now only known in single-volume format, first appeared in print as separate chapters, in monthly serial form, within the pages of these magazines.

That Shaw was invited to write for one of the most prestigious, her work appearing beside that of established and respected authors, is some indication of the enthusiastic critical reception of her first novel, *Castle Blair*.

First published in 1882 in monthly parts, like *Hector*, in *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, no British-published copy of Shaw's next novel, *Phyllis Browne* (1883), appears in any British academic library catalogue, nor is there any record of a British publisher for it. However it seems unlikely that *Phyllis Browne* was published as a complete novel only in America, and we may reasonably assume it appeared simultaneously in Britain and America. It also seems very likely that, as this was another commission from the Gattys, Bell again published it in a single volume. It is clear, therefore, that Flora Shaw's work was now appearing in the imprint of a major publisher of popular children's fiction. None of Shaw's subsequent novels was serialized prior to their appearance in book form. *Aunt Judy's Magazine* ceased publication in 1885, on the death of Juliana Ewing, thereby denying Shaw the opportunity to introduce her last two novels to the wide audience *Aunt Judy* had provided. Undoubtedly such serial publication created a large market for the single-volume versions, and the loss of this opportunity may be a significant factor in the subsequent decline in popularity of Shaw's last fiction, and her decision to turn instead to journalism.

Although *A Sea Change* (1885) was produced as part of their 'Young Lady's Library' by George Routledge and Sons, it seems from academic library records that the novel went no further than a single edition in Britain. Darton recognizes 'the change which...came upon books for girls' (288). He identifies '[t]hat class of reader, hitherto sparsely provided for when it grew out of short frocks – for between *Aunt Judy* and the milder sort of adult fiction there was a considerable gap – seems almost to have appeared suddenly' (288). It was to fill this gap that the ever-entrepreneurial Routledge publishing house collected authors for their 'Young Lady's Library', authors whose writing, like Shaw's *A Sea Change*, introduced increasingly young adult-oriented subject matter in which platonic adolescent love became increasingly sexually driven. However, of the seven books and writers 'Uniform with this Volume' named on the reverse of the title page, none merits an entry in any reference work. As discussed above, *Colonel Cheswick's Campaign* appears only to have been published

as a single-volume edition in the US, on the list of Roberts Brothers of Boston, who had published Shaw's earlier novels.

From an examination of the publishing history there seems to have been a greater recognition in the United States of Flora Shaw as an author of fiction, which may reflect her greater lasting popularity in that country, and may therefore account for the larger numbers of her books now surviving on the American continent. Another possible explanation may be that, in a country such as the US, with a much shorter non-indigenous history than Britain, Victorian books have been valued more as historical artefacts, and not thrown away with such careless abandon as in the UK. Alternatively, it may merely be an indication of the size of original print runs, which may have been smaller in the US, the sale of a complete run therefore necessitating a reprint or a new edition. Whatever the combination of causes, US editions of *Castle Blair* continue to appear regularly in antiquarian book lists, in a variety of imprints, indicating that from the 1870s until the 1930s they fulfilled the needs of the American adolescent and young adult as well as those in Britain. Evidence from the bookplates pasted into them shows that they found their way into libraries as well as homes in both the United States and Canada. These editions advertise Shaw's other novels, and editions postdating 1885 frequently add, as does an undated edition published by Little, Brown & Co. in Boston, beneath her name on the title page, 'author of "Hector", "Phyllis Browne" and "A Sea Change"' [sic].

However no republication of any of these titles, whether in Britain or abroad, makes any reference to *Colonel Cheswick's Campaign*. Little, Brown were still publishing *Castle Blair* in 1931, a reprint of a new edition issued in 1923 with illustrations, and a delightfully colourful dustwrapper which shows both the 'noble child' and the 'noble dog' which Ruskin had admired, his quotation appearing yet again on this cover, and inside. No mention is made of other books by Shaw, which may indicate that no others were in print by this date. As well as a resumé of the story, the rear of the wrapper explains that this is an 'improved edition, printed from new type and with new illustrations...issued at the request of a large number of librarians who have wished for young readers a more attractive edition than has heretofore been available'. There are, in addition, reviews from newspapers which heartily recommend the book for young American readers. This may give a further clue to the

continuing popularity of Shaw's first novel in America. We may imagine that the emigration of a large number of despairing Irish to America in order to escape from the poverty and unfair tenancy regulations imposed by their Anglo-Irish colonizers would have provided a significant audience for any book with Irish interest. A text which was suited to explaining the causes of emigration to the children of those migrants would have had a considerable audience. The explicitly Fenian content of *Castle Blair* would certainly have recommended it to an American audience; the Fenians, or Irish Republican movement, had been simultaneously founded in Dublin and New York in 1858.

Although originally published by Roberts Brothers in 1881, *Hector* was also published in the US by Little, Brown & Co., possibly as early as 1883, but the reason for this additional publisher is not known. Roberts Brothers first published *Phyllis Browne* in 1886, and by 1903 Little, Brown & Co., who had purchased titles from Roberts in 1898, had produced an edition which is identical with that serialized in *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, using the same illustrations. It is obvious that, as in Britain, when Shaw's serialized work appeared in single-volume format, no changes (other than Americanized spellings) were made. *Phyllis Browne* names '“Hector”, “Castle Blair” and “A Sea Change” ' [sic] as the author's other works, thereby confirming the likelihood that Shaw's last novel was not intended for the child readers who were considered the audience for her earlier work. *A Sea Change* was published by Roberts Brothers, in 1887, but it appears that this was to be the last of Shaw's fiction output to achieve success on both continents. As was the case in Britain, the appeal of Flora Shaw's novels, with their pervasive Victorian genteel colonial ideology, waned in the early years of the twentieth century. No more recent editions of Shaw's works (other than the 1985 US/UK Wolff edition of *Castle Blair*) had been published in America until the appearance in 2007 of a 'print on demand' facsimile by Kessinger of the 1879 Kegan Paul third edition of *Castle Blair*, and an online digitized text of the 1890 Roberts edition of *Hector*.<sup>10</sup>

Shaw's first novel was also translated into French: *Castel-Blair: histoire d'une famille irlandaise*, was published in a large, lavishly bound single volume edition 1889 by Alfred Mame et Fils, who later retitled it *Une Cousine de France*. The translation of *Castle Blair* is unabridged. Although Shaw herself was fluent in French and would



have been perfectly able to translate her work for publication Alfred Mame et Fils obviously preferred to publish it ‘traduit de l’anglais par A. Chevalier’. It is likely that by the time of the French edition, Shaw was too occupied with her developing career in journalism to enable her to undertake the task of translation. It is possible that this was an unauthorized publication. This, however, seems highly unlikely, as Mame was a major French publisher, established in 1766, famous for its varied list, which included much juvenilia and texts in translation. Mame was particularly noted for their religious publishing, and the explicit religious and moral philosophy of Shaw’s works would have proved attractive. No information about the author or her other work is given in *Castel-Blair*, nor apparently, was it thought necessary to encourage French readers by including Ruskin’s comments.<sup>11</sup>

### 8.5 The Progression of Shaw’s Fiction Writing

Before a detailed analysis of *Colonel Cheswick’s Campaign* is undertaken, it is useful to examine the way in which Shaw’s writing moved from novels aimed principally at a child audience to those directed towards Young Adults. The expression of Shaw’s socially conscious, Imperialist viewpoint through her two early novels, and their relevance to *Colonel Cheswick’s Campaign*, is considered in greater detail in Appendix 1, together with her sentimental penultimate fiction. *Castle Blair* is universally acknowledged as Shaw’s best piece of writing for young readers. Shaw’s books, from *Hector* onwards, include romantic themes, with, in *Phyllis Browne*, what Wolff (1985) describes as passion ‘sublimated by innocence’ (430). The protagonists are older than those of her first two novels, and an older readership is targeted. In the case of *A Sea Change*, with its implicit sexually-oriented juvenile relationships, the publishers clearly recognized the market potential of a cover and frontispiece showing the hero leaning over the bed of the heroine: a promise of covertly salacious material within. In *Colonel Cheswick’s Campaign* Shaw moves into specifically Young Adult girl-oriented issues: inter-generational relationships, romance, identity and duty.

In *Castle Blair* Shaw combines an adventure story with a consciously ideologically laden socio-political commentary. While enjoying the exploits of the hot-headed young idealist Murtagh, and his practical, spirited sister Winnie, readers are ultimately left the hope that their uncle will, in future, take a more active role as landlord. Ruskin had expected those colonists to ‘plough and sow’ for England, ‘behave kindly

and righteously for her...bring up their children to love her', and foresees that they will then be enabled to 'gladden themselves in the brightness of her glory' (1880:29). An adherent to this ideal, Flora Shaw, in *Castle Blair*, shows the transformation, through the unwitting offices of the Blair children, of an unsatisfactorily managed Irish estate towards the epitome of enlightened colonial rule described by Ruskin.

In her next novel *Hector*, Shaw elaborates particularly on the role of the gentleman, following the adventures of the eponymous hero, a young member of the English gentility, living in France with his French relatives. It is through her lengthy exposition of a *gentleman's* responsibilities that Shaw prepares to encourage her young female readers to consider their own future role as gentlewomen in this Imperial ideology. Here Shaw presents two alternative goals in adulthood to her young female readers: the wife whose total support for her husband was founded on her own energetic, proactive involvement in the furthering of his fortunes, versus the trophy wife, whose presence lent no more support than that of her role as a social attachment to her husband. As Hector tells his young cousin Zelig, '[l]adies can read and write a little more than Irma [a peasant girl], but they don't know anything much, and they can't do any work, and I don't see any good of having a wife unless she can be of some use to you' (80). Shaw had shown in *Castle Blair* that her preference was for the plucky girl who might grow into the proactive wife, a female role model she would pursue in *Phyllis Browne* and *Colonel Cheswick's Campaign*. In *Hector*, with its overt statements of genteel ideology, readers could find themselves reminded of the heroes of literature written more than a century earlier. Despite being far younger than Richardson's Sir Charles Grandison, Hector embodies exactly that same noble conviction of duty. Although Hector is the central character, Shaw's ideological message is aimed as clearly at her female readers: to support the male leaders of Empire, Young Adult girls need to be resourceful and courageous.

In Shaw's third novel, *Phyllis Browne* (1883) she creates a central character involved, like the Blair children, in a socially-conscious adventure, but whose personal and social position anticipate those of Ailsa Cheswick in the final novel. I shall therefore consider it in greater detail than her earlier novels, and within my main text. The eponymous heroine is fourteen years old, and the motherless daughter of Colonel Browne, who oversees the army gunpowder mills at 'Rainham'.<sup>12</sup> With this novel,

Shaw's focus moves ever further into the teenage years, and we observe Phyllis struggling with the issues that we have identified to be typical of adolescents and Young Adults. She has been raised in a family to whom duty is paramount, yet Phyllis pushes at the boundaries before finally accepting her early claim that 'I should not like to be anything that papa is not' (1883:7). Her twelve-year-old cousin Ladislav (Lal), the orphaned son of a Polish count, is as insistent as Phyllis about his role as a gentleman, but, like Murtagh, easily drawn in to an unquestioning championing of the working classes. Lal is determined to be 'noble', and states that, 'I like to feel that, no matter what I do, I always must be above the common people' (7). He has, Shaw comments, 'his own notions about the respect due to a gentleman'. In explaining the distinction between the deserving poor and those who are dishonest or lazy, Colonel Browne voices the late Victorian ideology which drives his philanthropic response. In answer to Phyllis's questions, 'how are the rich to help the poor?' and '[h]ow are the poor to be less miserable?' he replies '[b]y doing our duty' (147). When Lal covertly visits the Bates children to take medicine to the diphtheria infected household, Phyllis tells him that she believes that her father will always put duty above safety. She insists to her cousin that if Colonel Browne had known that Lal was disobeying the order to remain away from them, he 'would have cared very little about the infection, and ...a good deal about your not acting like a gentleman' (192).

Phyllis herself also speaks of her duty, both with regard to the trust her father and his sister put in them in the preparation of their lessons, and in supporting her father and her cousin in *their* duty as gentlemen. When Lal wants to put off school work, Phyllis protests '[i]t is our duty...[a]nd they trust us, and we'd be little cads if we did n't [*sic*] do it' (30). In the early pages of the book, recognizing Lal's aversion to boyish activities such as sport, she is already consciously adopting her future role as mother to empire-building sons. She 'used to impress on him earnestly' that '[a] boy must be active' (26), and is convinced that by so doing she 'had succeeded in imbuing him with some natural English feeling' (25). Shaw emphasizes that '[Phyllis] had a great number of boy cousins, and had profited fully by her opportunities of studying the male sex' (27). She has very clear expectations of him that are 'nothing less than that he should have all the good qualities and avoid the failings which she had observed in the English boy' (27). In fact she also supports him practically as well as ideologically, and despite her disapprobation at his involvement with the would-be

terrorist Bates, she risks her own life to rescue them first from the flood, and then from the explosion at the Mill.

Shaw depicts Phyllis as a typically adolescent girl, torn between duty and exasperation at parental restraints on the activities that she considers important. Instructed by her aunt not to talk to Lal about his exploits, ‘a bitter anger rose within her...She did not dream of resisting the decree, but her heart swelled with rebellion against her aunt, against circumstances’ and, tellingly, ‘above all against the fate which had made a girl of her – a thing always to be left behind!’ (134). She protests to herself, enraged with ‘the bitterness of her spirit’, ‘[t]alk of men!... Talk of men and what they do! I’m sure there’s nothing one thousandth part as hard as to sit at home and eat your heart out when you might be of use’ (134). There is no doubt, both in Shaw’s own life, and in the actions of her fictional heroines, that she admired and valued female courage in support of ideological duty, she was also convinced that a woman’s role was not to act as equal to men, but to train and support them in their efforts to spread the ideology of the English gentleman, a beneficent class structure, and the maintenance of an empire. So, near the end of the book, while her father and Lal venture out into the floods, Phyllis is told ‘[n]o, no, dear child; it’s not possible. You must stay and have a good fire in the dining room for us when we come back’ (245) and ‘was left to struggle as she could against her wild desire to go out too’ (246). Nevertheless it is the indomitable Phyllis who later climbs the sluice gate and enters a network of flooded tunnels in search of Bates, and tells the shrinking Lal, ‘[y]ou stay here and keep watch’ (273). Of Lal, whose increasing tendency to slip back into Polish shows us he is still not English, we learn that ‘[o]nly the instinct of a gentleman kept him at Phyllis’s side’ (273).

Unlike her previous heroines, Phyllis is portrayed by Shaw as an adolescent, uncertain, shy of adults in the earlier stages of the book, and progressively more romantically attracted to her cousin. When she is unhappy, Lal ‘would creep into her room and kiss her hands, and pour out expressions of his admiration for her...[s]he never explained to him exactly what her feelings were’ (30-31). Quarrelling, ‘she had never known before how fond she was of him’ (180), and when he has disobeyed his uncle, she tells him passionately, ‘if you want me to do anything for you I will do it’ (253). When Lal transgresses against his uncle’s (and Phyllis’s) gentlemanly ideal ,

his aunt leaves him to rest in the morning and is thanked ‘with a fervour which astonished her Aunt’ for ‘she felt ready almost to worship any one who showed him a kindness’ (263). Phyllis’s future stepmother, Lady Alicia, voices the message with which Shaw’s late Victorian Imperialist ideology sought to influence young female readers. Faced with Lal’s departure for boarding school, Phyllis is reminded that her purpose in life is to remain constant and supportive to gentlemen, ever preparing them as boys and facilitating the work that they do as adults:

It is the woman’s courage for which you must train yourself...  
But do not think that the woman has less to train herself for than the man. See these flower-edged streams which turn the mills. They are always here, left behind by the powder which goes to make noise in the world, but they are no less a force than it. All that it does is truly done by them. Out of rough materials its power is first perfected by their steady gentleness and strength.

(384)

Shaw’s penultimate novel, *A Sea Change* (1885/6), is the story of a shipwrecked, amnesiac, orphaned twelve-year-old girl, who is rescued by the Trevelyan family, but who searches for her true family. Its plot stretches our credulity to breaking point, a fault compounded by its stylistic lack of distinction. Nevertheless amidst the novel’s high Victorian sentimentality it considers issues of identity and relationships particularly relevant to a Young Adult female readership. Despite the reiteration of Shaw’s views about the role of the gentleman, and the consequent female supportive role as wife, there is the suggestion that girls might seek an alternative to marriage, for one of the Trevelyan girls, considers that it may be ‘[m]uch better not marry at all, but – go to Girton’ (133). In *Colonel Cheswick’s Campaign* we shall see that, had she been able to, Ailsa would have chosen to follow this advice and train as a doctor. We have also seen that Shaw herself was an independent woman, who chose a profession (though she was not in a position to choose university) which supported Imperial ideology, before marrying late to support a husband whose societal position was as Governor of various countries within that empire.

## 8.6 *Colonel Cheswick's Campaign*

Shaw's final novel was widely advertised in the press, and the subject of review and recommendation on both sides of the Atlantic. Once again, records from the United States seem to have survived better than those in Britain. From late 1885, Roberts Brothers' advertisement pages (in novels by other authors) for forthcoming books include *Colonel Cheswick's Campaign*.<sup>13</sup> It was widely purchased for public libraries, appearing in the catalogues of many libraries across the United States.<sup>14</sup> Images of many of the records cited appear in Appendix 1:294-304. The 1887 edition of the American publication *The Best Reading*, which annually reviewed '[t]he most important English and American publications for the five years ending Dec. 1<sup>st</sup> 1886', includes *Colonel Cheswick's Campaign* in the 500 books named in 'general fiction', a list which includes Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*.<sup>15</sup> *Books for Girls and Women and their Clubs*, edited in 1895 by Leypoldt and Iles for the American Library Association, also recommends Shaw's novel, stating that the titles included are 'the supreme books' ([i]) to which young people should confine their reading. The preface endorses 'two hundred and fifty American, British and Canadian authors and their principal works' (1), some of which are supported by 'trustworthy reviews' ([i]).<sup>16</sup> The books recommended by 'a reviewer for *The Nation*' are 'novels and tales of great interest to girls and women', carefully selected to exclude 'the vicious and depraved' (1).

Such widespread inclusion of *Colonel Cheswick's Campaign* in recommended reading for girls points to its popularity among reviewers. The 'reviewer for *The Nation*' may have based this selection on the 1886 review which appeared in that journal. In its issue of July 1<sup>st</sup> 1886 *The Nation*, the influential American weekly journal of opinion, politics and culture, an anonymous review praised Shaw's novel, repeating a comment that Ailsa was 'Zélie...or Phyllis Browne grown up' (14). The unnamed reviewer in *The Literary World* of May 29<sup>th</sup> 1886 felt it was 'fresh and delicate and original', providing 'an oasis in the arid world of everyday fiction' with its 'old-time quality' (182). *Cheswick* is praised for its simplicity, 'a short love story... such as we used to enjoy before M. Zola and Mr Henry James, Jr. took possession of their opposite poles of fiction', and the assessment of Ailsa is that she is 'as strong, as maidenly, as innocent, so wise, so deeply loyal, [it] is enough to take the bad taste of a decade out of the mouth'. We can therefore see that Shaw's novel is

applauded by the reviewers for its conservatism, its lack of the sensational, the vicious and depraved: ideal material for Young Adult girls. In an unattributed article, the February 27<sup>th</sup> 1886 issue of the journal *Notes on Books*, produced by Cheswick's English publishers, Longmans, nevertheless recognizes that it is 'a story of modern society' (58). The reviewer also identifies its key importance to Young Adult female readers, as it concerns 'the common fate of theories founded in youth upon one experience', acknowledging the ever-changing emotions and opinions experienced by young women before they find resolution. The reviewer sees this resolution as the 'womanly acceptance of the wider law' (58): in other words, ideology challenged, modified, but ultimately not displaced. Advertised in numerous newspapers and journals, including the *Times* of February 8<sup>th</sup> 1886, in the American book trade's journal *The Publishers Weekly*, in *The Academy*, the *National Book League News*, it was what *The Scottish Review* termed its 'old-fashioned morality' which particularly encouraged reviewers to recommend it as 'the best reading' for Young Adult girls.

## **8.7 Identifiers of Fiction for Young Adult girls:**

### **How Shaw Engages her Readers**

In examining *Colonel Cheswick's Campaign* I shall consider how Shaw addresses those topics which I have argued are identifiers of fiction for young adults: identity, familial and interpersonal relationships and romance. Because, unlike the novels I discuss in earlier chapters, Shaw in general, and *Colonel Cheswick's Campaign* in particular, are so little known now, I shall examine the text in greater detail than with those better-known works. I seek to show that *Cheswick's* message, delivered through the twenty-two-year-old Ailsa Cheswick, confirms McCallum's statement that novels for young adults are dominated by a 'pre-occupation with subjectivity, especially the development of notions of selfhood, relationships between self and others and between individuals and society'. In writing this novel, Shaw seeks particularly to use her heroine to engage and thereby prompt her Young Adult girl readers towards suitable choices 'among conflicting possibilities', and 'the struggle between public and private concepts of self' (McCallum 2006, 4:217). Shaw's messages advocate choices which will encourage her audience towards the establishment of a stable late Victorian family primarily organized to support an imperialist ideology. There is no explicit guidance about sexual relationships, advice which Young Adult girls such as Hardy's Tess sought, as this was not considered

suitable material for inclusion in late nineteenth-century novels written for this specific audience.

In the brief discussion of *Phyllis Browne* earlier in this chapter I noted that the novel was based on time spent as housekeeper/governess in the household of Charles Brackenbury, an old friend and the cousin of one of her brothers-in-law. Shaw, in her later twenties at the time, had an intense relationship with Brackenbury, described by Brackenbury's biographer as a 'quasi-filial close friend'[ship]' and, as a result of research by Shaw scholars Callaway and Helly, as a 'deep romantic attachment'.<sup>17</sup> Ruskin's interest in Shaw is described by Bell as at first 'paternal' (1947:20), but it is clear that when the fifty-year-old Ruskin himself was embroiled in his disastrous courtship of Rose la Touche, three years Shaw's senior, Shaw instead provided support and counsel to Ruskin. It is tempting to speculate that aspects of all these complex friendships with much older 'father figures' influenced the intense relationship Shaw portrays between Ailsa and her father, Colonel Cheswick. Shaw's dearly-loved mother died in 1870 and in the following year her 'aloof, and somewhat unapproachable' (23) father remarried, to a widow who was 'not very congenial to his elder daughters' (25). Shaw, used because of her mother's long standing invalidity to managing the household, found the situation with her step-mother 'an embarrassment' (25) and increasingly removed herself from the family home to stay for protracted periods with other relatives and friends. Through her characterization of Ailsa we see Shaw facilitating a means whereby her Young Adult girl readers might vicariously experience a situation which had considerable relevance at that time: the alternative family resulting from a remarriage, and in which the stepmother was estranged by age or lack of interest from the daughters.<sup>18</sup> It is these intergenerational family relationships which lie at the heart of *Colonel Cheswick's Campaign*, and which profoundly influence Ailsa's response to other identifiers of Young Adult fiction: questions of identity and responses to romantic dilemmas, as well as the overarching questions around the relationship of self to society. Shaw deftly leads her readers to realize that the 'campaign' of the title refers not merely to Colonel Cheswick's military activities, but also to his hope that Ailsa will marry Jack Charteris, the young man he thinks most suited to her personality. He tells his wife, '[t]he object of my campaign...the only thing for which I care much now, is to get Ailsa well married' (I:63). Rather than forcing her, or even overtly suggesting his opinion, Cheswick



instead organizes a marital rather than a military campaign, engineering a situation in which Ailsa will come to recognize Jack's particular strengths, and discover for herself that he would be the ideal companion for the life she intends.

### **8.8 Intergenerational Family Relationships**

Shaw places the twenty-two-year-old Ailsa Cheswick in a family beset by difficult and complex relationships between father, stepmother and daughter. We may reasonably assume that Shaw at thirty-four was writing from her own experience from the age of eighteen until her late twenties, but conflating into Ailsa's relationship with her father a number of separate issues from her own interaction with older men in her life. Colonel Cheswick is far from the 'aloof, and somewhat unapproachable' Major General Shaw, and Ailsa's interaction with her father seems to offer the novel's readers the alternative father figure Shaw may have found in her relationship with Charles Brackenbury, twenty years her senior. Indeed on close scrutiny there is a level of Ailsa's relationship with her father which could be considered more connubial than filial. Interviewing Ailsa's childhood friend, and now her suitor, Ted Mohun, Cheswick states that 'Ailsa is without exception the best woman that I know' (I:55).<sup>19</sup> The passion of his feeling for her may be judged by Shaw's description of him as having 'tossed off his full glass of wine, and set the glass back on the table so sharply that the stem snapped and it shattered into several pieces' (I:55). As I shall show later in this section, the marital relationship between Cheswick and Henrietta ('Sweetie') is one of frustration, and in his eyes, the attributes of Cheswick's daughter would be likely to surpass those of his disappointing second wife.

There seems almost to be a deeper, more sexual (if subconscious) element to his love for Ailsa, evidenced by the startling visual image Shaw creates in the first chapter of the second volume during the conversation between father and daughter in Ailsa's tiny office. We are first shown her 'sitting here at her desk one morning, bending over account books...' (II:10), when 'a shadow fell upon her work' (II:10). The shadow is that of her father, 'white and old'. Ailsa draws him to the chair and kneels beside him, and Cheswick 'looked down...at the figure of which the sun's rays were lighting every line...she raised her face towards him and met his eyes' (II:12). To Victorian readers this image might well recall the narrative art connected with dramatic, romantic and sensational subjects, to which I referred in my previous

chapter. Images pertinent to my discussion will be found in Appendix 3:316-322. Considering her close friendship with Ruskin, himself an artist and critic of fine art, and friend and mentor to the artist Millais, we might also consider it likely that Shaw was aware of the visual impact of her image, and the work of artists such as Millais and other members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

To appreciate fully the relationship which Shaw describes between father and daughter it is necessary to examine that between Ailsa and her stepmother. Unlike Colonel Cheswick, who despairs at the extravagance and shallowness of his wife, Ailsa defends and protects her stepmother against his often bitter disappointment in his choice. She calls her stepmother 'Sweetie', a pet name which encompasses both Ailsa's affectionate recognition of her stepmother's good (though ineffectual) intentions, and her childlike, plaintive inadequacy to deal with the straightened financial situation the family is facing. Early in the novel, after the Colonel has criticized his wife's indecision, we see her as 'she clung to her stepdaughter, sobbing helplessly on the strong young breast' (I:38), and learn that 'from the age of thirteen Ailsa had been her stepmother's confidante, and she had given pity and comfort as she could' (II:47). Later we see that the Young Adult Ailsa is taller than her stepmother (II:205), a visual indication that in many ways their family roles are reversed. Her father does not use a pet name for his wife (though he does for his daughter – 'Ailzie'), instead upbraiding her for her behaviour, and often discussing his wife's shortcomings with his daughter. He listens to his wife's complaints 'with a slightly savage expression' (I:46), 'the thunderclouds... gathering on his brow' (I:48), then comments sharply to her 'I thought you women were supposed to have eyes...I wish, Henrietta, that you could keep your [eyes] open here on the spot to what is passing under them, and manage to avert some simple misadventures' (I:47). His wife's great attention to all that is trivial, and with Frou-Frou, her lapdog, renders Cheswick at best 'sombre and pre-occupied' (I:49), while at worst he views her as 'one of the many follies of his past' (II:44). Bitterly resentful that she '[finds] the dog's claims on your attention more pressing than mine' (I:65), perennially conscious of the mistake he has made in the choice of a wife, and of her shortcomings as a stepmother to his beloved daughter, he frequently acts with exasperation, and even callous cruelty towards her, as he does when he tears up one of his old love letters to her.

Again reminiscent of Victorian narrative art, Shaw's description of the angry husband is a powerful image which draws our sympathy for the weak wife, and recalls the 1863 magazine illustration for *Lady Audley's Secret* reproduced in Appendix 3: 322. We are told that '[h]e read the letter, tore it deliberately into small pieces, ...returned to the waste-paper basket and threw them in' (II:45). In his comment '[t]hat is the place for them!' and the image of him as '[h]e pointed sternly to the waste-paper basket and left the room' (II:45). In her frequent depictions of husband and wife, each disappointed and resentful in their own way of the other's behaviour and attitude, Shaw warns her Young Adult readers that romance can fade over the years – '[i]t is far better to know' (I:77) Ailsa tells her stepmother – and that something far deeper is needed to ensure that a strong, lasting and happy marriage is achieved. Shaw offers an additional warning in her depiction of the relationship of a neighbouring landowner and his wife: the castle is 'shut-up (I:214), and '[t]he castle grounds were beautiful, but much neglected. The Duke of Exborough cared little for the flat country and rarely visited it' (I:215). She elaborates this into an image of the marriage: '[i]t was usually understood amongst his friends that when he spoke of the flat country he thought of the Duchess' (I:215), and reinforces her message by adding, '[h]owever that might be, she had shared the fate of the castle, and her friends could not see the place without some pathetic sense of the parallel' (I:215). The Duchess is described as '[p]oor soul' (I:215), but held to be contributory to her own fate 'by pardoning all his follies...a frivolous young woman, laughing over her heartbreak. This is her judgement' (I:216). Mrs Cheswick's ineffectiveness is then emphasized through her comment on this: '[b]ut what can we do?... It appears to me that women are as helpless in the matter as my poor Frou-Frou' (I:216). Shaw has a clear message for her Young Adult girl readers: they should make a careful choice of husband, and then actively participate in maintaining intellectual and emotional equality within the relationship.

To the Colonel, Ailsa, his only child, is both confidante and an ever present reminder of his happier but brief marriage to her mother. She is all that remains of that first relationship, and whereas Sweetie's shortcomings make him feel old, Shaw comments that when he speaks to Ailsa 'he was young again' (I:22), and that '[h]e was again now certainly Ailsa's brother or cousin – anything but her father' (I:23). When eventually Cheswick receives the summons to return to his regiment and prepare for

war, he gathers in his arms not his wife but his daughter, and although he claims that a soldier ‘has neither wife nor child nor home’ (I:230), he tells her that ‘if it be true that on the point of death men think of what they have loved best, I shall think of you in action’ (I:231). Again, Shaw’s description of Cheswick and Ailsa, ‘...his eyes falling on the face near him – the quivering eager face which was not the face of a boy – he stooped and kissed her’ (I:231) seems more that of lovers than father and daughter. Millais’ famous picture of *The Black Brunswicker*, painted in 1860 and reproduced in Appendix 3: 317, its sentimental subject achieving great popularity when exhibited in that year at the Royal Academy, might well illustrate this passage, and is likely to have been known to many of Shaw’s readers. Millais’ image shows a young subaltern embracing his love before he leaves for battle. However the position of the young woman, her head leaning against his chest, her body blocking his way, indicates her wish to obstruct him from his task and prevent his destiny. So Ailsa, as ‘the tears brightened upon her eyelashes’ (I:230), faces the inevitability of losing the most important man in her life. Speaking to Jack Charteris, whose suit for his daughter Cheswick secretly supports, the Colonel considers that his daughter will not contemplate marriage because ‘at present Ailsa cares supremely for me’ (II:116). She has admitted to Jack Charteris that she has need for no-one other than her father. Mistaking him in the twilight for her father, when she tells him, with ‘unconsciously contemptuous vigour’, ‘no thank you! I don’t want anyone else’ (I:197), we are aware that this refers not just to her immediate situation, but to her total preoccupation at this point with her father, which excludes any other thoughts of emotional romantic attachment. It is only after her father’s death that she can contemplate a relationship with any other man: ‘Daddy, dear Daddy! I shall care for nothing after you’ she cries when faced with the possibility that her father will not return from the war, a cry which Shaw comments ‘proved her still very young’ (II:24-25). When his death is confirmed, she walks in the bleak landscape of winter, where she had walked in the summer with her father:

Could it be that spring would come again... that from  
the mud of the ploughed field green ears would sprout,  
that ever again the barren thorns would garland  
themselves with blossom?...And strangely on this day  
Ailsa felt that she too might have been capable of  
renewal.

(III:214-215)

She feels that she has reached a maturity, 'standing a few steps further on' (III:215) both physically and emotionally, in which she can consider moving on from a love totally reserved for him:

If he had lived, it still seemed to her that she had had enough while she loved him. Now standing a few steps further on, where he had taken her promise not to engage herself to marry till the war was over, she found she was asking herself questions which she had never asked herself before. Could it be that women sometimes felt for their husbands such tenderness of affection as she had felt for him... Was marriage then sometimes not the end but the beginning of a happy life?

(III:215-216)

It is in these two final sentences that Shaw guides her Young Adult girl readers towards an acceptance of romantic/sexual love, a severing of the childish familial relationships in which a father might be the object of a girl's subliminal desires. Shaw also reassures her readers that however unsatisfactory their parents' marriage might be, those girl readers, like Ailsa, may still confidently seek a happy and fulfilling marriage of their own.

## **8.9 Romance and Love: Life's Choices**

### **i. Ailsa Cheswick: 'the radiance of noble youth' (I:118)**

Both the devotion between Ailsa and her father, and an acknowledgement of the lack of understanding and consequent damaged relationship between her parent and step-parent, underpin Shaw's treatment of romance and love in *Colonel Cheswick's Campaign*. Ailsa idolizes her father, yet recognizes his shortcomings, the 'one human being on earth who had all [his] confidence, and who... loved [him], knowing all [his] faults (II:24). Cheswick is determined that she will marry a man who is worthy of her, and his campaign allows for other suitors who, he is confident, will woo her romantically, but who will fall short of Ailsa's expectations and needs as she matures emotionally. Perceptively he remarks that '[y]oung love draws a great deal of blood, but it doesn't kill' (I:72).

Accordingly, Shaw shows her readers that Ailsa must experience both the pleasure and the pain of young love in order to realize what she actually desires in a man and make a choice. Ted Mohun, with whom she has grown up, is tender and thoughtful in

his pursuit of her, but she knows that she cannot accept him, or anyone at present, as a lover. Shaw describes a romantic scene of proposal which would closely engage her Young Adult girl readers. She creates an archetypal image of young lovers in the moonlight, standing looking at the mists in the valley below:

...young love had spoken and received its answer.  
Outside in the moonlight two figures stood side by side.  
Ailsa with white dress falling straight in the damp air,  
and shawl dropping back, unheeded, like a monk's cowl  
from her fair young head; Ted Mohun with face turned  
towards hers, eyes fixed on her eyes, hand touching  
(I:66)

Colonel Cheswick having deliberately egged Ted on in his task, Shaw's audience might anticipate that the lovers are now betrothed, but Cheswick's campaign is calculated and ruthless, and Ted is instead sacrificed to ensure that Ailsa will ultimately make the right choice of husband, one in which her father can trust. Ted is sincere but predictable in his disappointment, voicing sentiments that would stir the passions of any Young Adult girl reading the novel. He tells Ailsa '[y]ou have filled my life till the thought of you enters into everything I do and makes me better...I ask nothing better than to be allowed to love you...I am well content just to have met you and loved you' (I:67-69). His final gesture, asking that he may keep as a token 'a little glove...[which] he drew from his breast' (I:69), before leaving her on the terrace, recalls the Pre-Raphaelite fascination with medieval courtly love, and the numerous idealized images it engendered in the second half of the nineteenth century, some of which are reproduced in Appendix 3:319. We may also recall the preponderance of medieval settings in the Gothic novel, and of monastic references. Shaw's description of Ailsa, 'with white dress falling straight in the damp air, and shawl dropping back, unheeded, like a monk's cowl' (I:66), emphasizes her youth and virginity. The imagery of the white dress and the implication of monastic chastity in the shawl's resemblance to a monk's cowl, show her to be lacking in sexual maturity and unprepared for marriage.

Ailsa regrets having to hurt Ted by her refusal, but because of her experience of Colonel and Mrs Cheswick's relationship, she feels that 'of course love doesn't last' (I:72). She feels angered because '[Ted] was just like my brother, and I am disappointed! I had thought better of him than to suppose he would give way to

rubbing sentimentality! (I:72). She most regrets the change in their future relationship, and feels that '[h]e cannot come back the same' (I:73). With her father and stepmother's fraught relationship as her model, she can only conclude that '[love] is only a delusion...I don't believe that it exists. The whole thing is a fancy which sensible people should keep clear of...this sentimental love business only seems to me a passing madness' (I:75). Because of this Ailsa is afraid of love, and because she values above all both her independence and the faith her father puts in her to run the estate on his behalf, she considers that marriage is 'a horrible bond...it is nothing but a snare for dignity, happiness and independence' (I:76).

Paradoxically, it is Ailsa's independence which draws her into her next consideration of marriage. Although she has already met Jack Charteris, and he has made a favourable initial impression upon her, she does not consider him as a possible husband, but instead 'a big pauper' (I:110), and Mary Howard's likely fiancé. Shaw, however, having made her readers party to Colonel Cheswick's campaign, is careful to show that Charteris stands apart from the young male visitors 'by his unlikeness to any of the others' (I:109), and creates a vivid visual image of him, in which '[t]he glow of sunlight in which he presented himself appeared to have penetrated his being' (I:110). We are once more reminded of the Pre-Raphaelite vision of chivalry, notably Dicksee's *Chivalry* (1885, reproduced in Appendix 3:319), in which knights are defined as rescuers, protectors and lovers, bathed in a light which signifies their purity and manliness. Ailsa, however, mindful above all of the precarious state of her father's finances, and the probability that their estate, St Gilbert's, must be sold should he die, decides that she must marry for money to save the inheritance. Ted, '...four and twenty, fair-haired, grey-eyed, with a broad forehead and sensitive mouth...' (I:14) is therefore unsuitable, having no money, inclining to bookishness, but also being still immature, for over the sensitive mouth 'the moustache was slow to grow' (I:14). Ailsa realizes that she needs mature financial resources to ensure her future and that of St Gilbert's, and she admits that 'I might, like other people, want to marry for money' (I:226), and ultimately acknowledges that Lord Exborough's heir, Lord Amyot, would be a suitable choice. He, 'a very simple young man' (II:29), seeks her help to learn about estate management, and their shared interest encourages a seemingly inexorable progress towards a betrothal.

Throughout this unromantic courtship however, Shaw tantalizes her readers with her portrayal of the unconscious but ever deepening attraction between Ailsa and Jack Charteris. Shaw has shown that Jack, a mature man of the world at thirty-one, imagines ‘the woman of his dreams’ (II:96). She is one who ‘was to stand upon her own ground in some measure independent of her sex’, and that she will be more than a mother and housekeeper, rather a ‘friend of his heart, companion of his brain’ who is ‘alive without him, independent of him, yet needing him as he needed her’ (II:96). We are aware that Ailsa fits this ideal, that Jack realizes this, and that he is tasked by Colonel Cheswick with her future. At this point, half way through the novel, he asks Cheswick, ‘...if I can win her, may I have her?’ (II:121), but the relationship takes a further four hundred pages to cement. Shaw offers her readers the chance to experience, through Ailsa, the slow maturation of emotions and Ailsa’s recognition that she can love romantically, as her growing love for Jack overcomes her filial obsession and her pragmatic relationship with Amyot. Shaw portrays through Major and Mrs Stone a Victorian ideal: a long-lasting happy marriage which developed from a youthful romance. They ‘married for love when they were young, they were model husband and wife when [Cheswick] was a boy, they are lovers now’ (II:132), but Shaw realizes that there are other routes to a lasting relationship, and Ailsa’s involves making difficult choices. The choices to be made by Ailsa may not be as dramatic or life-threatening as those made by the heroines considered in my earlier chapters, but they perfectly represent some of the issues which perturbed the late Victorian Young Adult girl facing her mature future.

Because Cheswick has entrusted Jack with Ailsa’s care, and extracted his daughter’s promise not to consider marriage until after the war, their love grows unconsidered (certainly on Ailsa’s part) and gradually. When Cheswick finally leaves for war duty, she is depicted sobbing at the office window. Shaw then creates an engagingly romantic scene in which Ailsa’s ‘hand was drawn through some one’s arm, and she found she was being led quietly to a seat’ (II:173), while ‘[she] felt his heart beat under the hand which lay on his arm...She was grateful that he said nothing’ (II:173). The beating heart is a subtle but clearly defined indication of Jack’s passion, and Shaw indicates that this heightened emotion is transmitted – consciously or not - to Ailsa. She has not yet realized her feelings, for later ‘[s]he did not take his arm, but they walked side by side’ (II:177), unlike Jack, who ‘knew now that he loved Ailsa,



that he loved her passionately, that the joy of his life...depended upon whether it was to be lived with her dear companionship' (II:179). Love is seen as a rejuvenating power, '[l]ife lay before him a long and smiling way' (II:179), so, for Shaw's Young Adult girl readers, Ailsa's slow recognition of his feelings is as frustrating as it is titillating. There are indications that she is aware of a change in her feelings, as '[i]t was a disappointment...next morning to learn...that he had gone to town already, and Ailsa thought she had never known [Amyot] so dull' (II:181). Jack quietly pursues his goal, and more frequently we see that 'he took her hand...kept her hand as he spoke...pressed it warmly' (II:197), and although Ailsa, 'gently withdrew her hand' (II:197), she recognizes an influence on her emotions as 'the pressure of his hand lingered with her' (II:198).

Shaw continues to build the emotional tension, as she shows Ailsa and Jack walking in the grounds discussing the demands of duty, matters which occupy their conscious thoughts. To represent the development of their mutual love, she frequently places them in an outdoor environment, beyond the confines of house and family and, mirroring the verdant settings, we see their relationship grow and flower. As Jack prepares to depart for war, he seeks Ailsa's advice about his inheritance as Lord Greytown, and Shaw creates an archetypically romantic picture which her Young Adult girl readers could recognize from popular contemporary images, both fine art and commercial sources, as may be judged by the images reproduced in Appendix 3:321. To appreciate the sensuous intensity of the image, and its sensual effect on readers, particularly Young Adult girls, the passage deserves extended quotation:

The moon had already risen. The terrace and gardens were softly illuminated. The fountain shot up like a silver torch between beds of musks and carnation. Nightingales lingered in the woods not far off, and at intervals called and answered; their notes were rare still, and low, only preluding the chorus of the night. Along all the scale of standing and climbing plants, from the limes above to the mignonette which grew rankly in roomy borders, sweet scents gathered. The warm air which stirred the blossoms was the acolyte of ten thousand censers. Far away at the foot of the hill a light mist lay on the meadows, seeming to surround St. Gilbert's with a silvery sea.

'I cannot fancy paradise lovelier,' Ailsa said under her breath. 'Hush! listen.'

One nightingale sang alone. The strong rich notes filled the night...It seemed only a beginning, and presently into the silence came, not the same, but another note, meltingly sweet, tremulous, sad. It continued alone, holding the hearers entranced, till the first note answered, and the duet began...

‘There are two,’ said her companion gently, ‘in paradise.’

(II:207-208)

In the midst of Shaw’s elaborate description, the comments of Ailsa and Jack continue to chart the progress of their love. To Ailsa the physical setting is ‘paradise’, but Jack, acutely aware of his currently unrequited love for her, is conscious that her presence beside him in this enchanted setting mirrors the romance of the nightingales, and therefore ‘[t]here are two...in paradise’. As his departure comes closer, he wrestles with thoughts of love and death, and although he is ever aware that she does not yet love him, in his imagination he sees Ailsa looking at him ‘with gentle, pathetic, grey eyes – eyes which seemed to say that she, after all, wanted him as he wanted her’ (II:223). Shaw artfully builds the suspense, titillating her readers with Jack’s constant, quiet attention after a spell in London, his ‘air of being at home’ (II:251) when at St. Gilbert’s, and Ailsa’s realization that ‘it was very pleasant to have him to talk to once more’ (II:251). In their last conversation together, Jack, older, and with past experience of loving, knows his feelings, ‘[h]e treasured the moments consciously, counting them as pearls of memory that were securely his’ (II:265). Ailsa, still emotionally tied to her father, still a young woman inexperienced in love, ‘was unconsciously happy’ (II:265). Shaw reiterates Ailsa’s devotion to her father, her emotional immaturity and her ‘feminine belief in friendship’ (II:251) which obscure her recognition of her growing feelings; the author thereby deflects any possible criticism which her Young Adult girl readers might level at Ailsa’s attitude to Jack.

In describing Jack’s departure, Shaw again presents her readers with archetypal images of Victorian sentiment, and another example of the freedom of emotion allowed by being in natural surroundings. He and Ailsa walk in the grounds, he

gathers a spray of two wild roses, and asks her to keep one as a pledge that she will not forget what he has said to her. While he has made a passionate if veiled statement of his emotional commitment to her, she has merely acknowledged his kindness as a friend. 'If there is anything unexpressed which, looking back, you could have wished expressed, remember that I too wished it said' (II:267), he repeats, and insists that he takes the full-blown rose, and she, the bud, powerful visual indicators of their respective feelings for each other. We are not surprised that the image left with readers at the conclusion of the second volume evokes both the Pre-Raphaelite vision of a lady bidding farewell to her knight, off to battle, and that Victorian ideological favourite, the blue robed, Madonna-like ministering angel sending her Empire-building soldier/lover to his destiny. Appendix 3:317-321 reproduces typical images. Shaw writes:

At a little after six next morning he was being driven away lonely from the silent shuttered house, when a blue figure stepped out of the porch, and shading her eyes looked down the avenue to see him go. He turned and saw her. She waved him a farewell...the picture left to him...was...of Ailsa standing by the doorway with the sun shining on her bright hair and on the woollen dress in which he had first met her in the fields.

(II:269-270)

This marks the turning point in Shaw's narrative of romance and love: she divides her novel into two parts (this has nothing to do with its three-decker format), and Ailsa is now left without the influence of either her erstwhile love, her father, or her future love, Jack Charteris. Significantly, while she is still stunned by their departure and 'unconscious' to her future, she watches 'a tiny pink bud open slowly to a shell-like cup', and she looks at it 'with a sort of wonder at the associations it had' (III:11). True to her promise she preserves the flower by pressing it, where, like her unrecognized feelings for Jack, 'it lay waiting the time when it should be asked back again' (III:11). However Shaw further tantalizes her readers, showing that Ailsa has come to terms with marriage as her way forward, but as Lord Amyot's wife. As I shall discuss in my final section, this is a crucial point in Ailsa's progress towards an identity of her own, but we may conjecture that Young Adult girls reading this section of the novel would be more frustrated and exasperated by her choice, than approving of her ideologically driven sense of duty. She is 'bored' by Amyot, 'noting every annoying trick he possessed' (III:19), but because she has experienced her father's

long, unloving relationship with Sweetie she is 'on the whole, content' (III:19) to become Amyot's wife. Amyot's proposal makes her realize that she can never consider him as an equal, and she tells him that 'I don't love you in the least...I like you' (III:50-51), readily admitting, but with 'a sense of humiliation' (III:54), that she would not consider marrying him if he did not have an inheritance which would assure the fate of St. Gilbert's. When her father is killed Ailsa's grief is so intense that she can think of nothing else, and, a mere ninety pages from the novel's end, Shaw continues to torment her readers with the possibility that Ailsa's new vulnerability lays her open to a disastrous future. 'Had Lord Amyot proposed that day, Ailsa would have accepted him', (III:189) she warns.

It is only with Ailsa's wish to hear from Jack how her father died that she realizes that 'it was not only on her father's account that she wished to see her friend again' (III:199), and she is prepared to travel to Egypt immediately to find him. While her mother's maid's 'notions of romance' (III:202) are fired by this decision, however, Shaw continues to keep her audience on tenterhooks, new information about Jack proves the trip unnecessary, and Amyot's proposal becomes ever more likely to be made and accepted. Although we are told that 'she shrank like the mere girl she was with unutterable repugnance from the reality at hand' (III:213), even when Jack returns, Ailsa is determined that she must make the marriage which will save St. Gilbert's. We saw in my earlier examination of intergenerational relationships that Ailsa eventually feels that, like the seasons, 'she might have been capable of renewal' (III:215). In moving on from her all-consuming love for her father she can, nevertheless, still only consider her duty to her family estate, and her emerging realization of her love for Jack is brought about by his gentleness and sympathy rather than a passionate outburst. Once more, Shaw's images are mirrored in popular art (Appendix 3:317 and 321), '[t]hey stood together...he...looking down at her...The lifting of her eyes to his was answer enough... 'You are not alone. Not now', he added' (III:222-224). Nevertheless he is convinced by Mrs Cheswick that the announcement of Ailsa's engagement to Amyot is imminent, and '[t]he blow was so unexpected that he staggered under it' (III:248), unaware that Ailsa's acceptance will never now be given. Amyot's petulant pleas for Ailsa's love, spurred by his jealousy of her preoccupation with Jack, trigger in her a pity for him, but his outburst against what he considers to be her father's selfishness finally destroys any thought she might

retain of marrying him. She tells him, 'I did honourably intend to marry you. But now I don't think I can ever forgive you' (III:239). As she reconsiders her situation since the death of her father, she realizes that Amyot is 'an inconsiderable speck' (III:250, while with Jack, 'all subjects seemed deeper and greater' (III:251), and she recognizes her error in contemplating marriage for money (and St. Gilbert's) alone.

Shaw concludes her novel with a reassuringly romantic message for her audience. Ailsa, by chance, comes across the rose which Jack gave her, and she finally realizes her true feelings for him, released now from her perceived obligation to marry Amyot and his inheritance, and freed, by her father's death, to make her own choice. As Ailsa makes these discoveries, Shaw seeks to sweep her audience along, to involve them in Ailsa's joy as 'her own secret was revealed to her at last!' and as '[i]n the first rush of sensation, it seemed to her that it was for this moment that she had lived' (III:255). Through that flower Ailsa finds hope and terror, sensations to which her young female audience could respond: hope what was left unsaid at Jack's departure for war was a declaration of his love for her, and terror that 'he had never meant, had never thought of that which she was wishing now' (III:256). When she finds herself almost kissing the rose, '[i]t was as if she had offered him her lips unasked' (III:256), but we feel that rather than shame at making so bold a gesture, her greater fear is that it might be rebuffed. Nevertheless, it is 'with a strange throb at her heart, and a strange soft light in her eyes' (III:257) that she moves on both from her father's death and Amyot's suit. Shaw's message to Young Adult girls is that emotional maturation makes 'the most commonplace...become wonderful' (III:264), and that as true love changes Ailsa, so it will them. Shaw shows us that only with this new confidence, as 'a woman of the world' III:265), can Ailsa finally meet Jack on an equal footing, and she responds to his request for the rose knowing that she is now ready to make her choice. To his statement that '[i]t was a little bud...when I left it with you', she replies, '[i]t is a full-blown rose now!' (III:268). Hearing this he kisses the rose, 'he bent above her', and their future is assured 'in the meeting of their lips' (III:268). With this final passage of archetypal Victorian imagery, we might imagine that Shaw could amply satisfy any romantic appetite within her Young Adult female audience.

**ii. 'Pretty little' Mary Howard (I: 97)**

Whereas Ailsa's journey to find love and romance moves her from a state of emotional childhood to readiness for full womanhood, Shaw also seeks to show that this is not the only route which can lead to true love and a happy marriage. In Mary Howard we see a girl of twenty-one, 'as nice a girl as you can meet in London' (I:97), who 'knows what she wants' (I:96), who 'is about to lay siege in force to the position of Lady Greytown' (I:97). Colonel Cheswick sarcastically admires Mary's knowledge of the world of suitors and suitable marriages, telling Ailsa that '[y]ou may learn a great deal that will be useful to you' (I:97), about 'the craft of husband-catching' (I:100). Cheswick, a man of the world, sees Mary's skill in attracting a husband, for 'she is as good-natured as she is pretty...She loves the profession for its own sake, and there is nothing she would enjoy more than to instruct a person of [Ailsa's] intelligence in the art of catching, playing, and landing men!' (I:100). Shaw is warning us that Mary is a pretty, vivacious, but shallow girl, ever conscious that her sole destiny is a profitable marriage. Once she has arrived at St. Gilbert's Mary presents a very different type of Young Adult girl to the serious, unsophisticated Ailsa. Mary is 'a born coquette', a 'blushing blonde, so timid yet so perfectly assured, so frank and innocent, yet so worldly-wise, so simply good-natured, yet so imperially spoilt' (I:111-112). Mary is charming, she 'instinctively laid siege' (I:111) to every young man, but she 'always managed to flutter on the limits of coquetry without stepping over the border-land to become fast' (I:115), so that she always appears 'a good sweet simple little woman' (I:116). Shaw's early descriptions of Mary reveal her as a chocolate box beauty, 'rolling curls of light brown hair on the tips of her rosy fingers...soft round throat...dimpled shoulders...prettily curved arms...graceful poise of the head...fugitive colour so sensitive it came and went for pleasure in a well-placed curl' (I:116-117), and 'the pretty darling' (I:239).

Shaw constantly refers to Mary as rosy, or 'rose-coloured' (I:239, I:254), but it is Ailsa who opens like a rose as she moves from budding to full-blown love. It is no coincidence that Major and Mrs Stone, whose lifelong love is the epitome of married bliss, lived at Rose Farm. Mary's appearance seems to indicate her character, bubbly and insubstantial, and it is vividly contrasted with Ailsa's 'statuesque...unbroken harmony of purity...the radiance of noble youth' (I:118). As the novel progresses however, Mary's attitude to love changes, and we see a depth of character in her, an

exemplar through which Shaw reassures her young audience that emotional maturity may be reached by very different routes. Mary herself is unaware of her depths at first, for she is convinced that in her character 'there is nothing to find out' (I:123), yet it is this very self-awareness which allows her to develop. She appears shallow and silly, prone to 'reckless frankness' (I:177), a matchmaker critical of Ailsa's 'old maid's ways' (I:178), treating the young male guests at St Gilbert's as her playthings as each comes to 'lay all his wits at fair Mary's shrine' (I:235-236).

However it is the situation she engineers when out walking with Jack, and where she first encounters Ted Mohun, which precipitates the change in 'her little coquettish heart' (I:247). Shaw observes that 'after a certain age men must cease to play the public fool. Woman too perhaps!' (I:236), but that 'Mary had not yet reached the age' (I:236). Out walking, Mary thoughtlessly demands that Jack gather a bunch of nuts, but it is Lord Tommie, ensnared by her flirting 'as she played the coquette' (I:244), who rushes to fulfil her increasingly imperious commands, and dislocates his shoulder in doing so. From Shaw's description of Mary's behaviour, we could imagine that the young woman will eventually become as ineffectual and foolish as Mrs Cheswick, as despite Tommie's predicament, she continues to flirt with Jack. Even when she realizes the gravity of the situation, she uses it to her advantage, as 'the coquette was all merged in the sisterly girl...[her] breath came and went as for sobs' (I:257). We learn that 'Mary cried like a child...covering her face with two little bare hands through which tears trickled in bright running drops...mopping up her tears with a little lace-edged handkerchief, never intended for a purpose so tragic' (I:259-260), cementing our belief that Mary is incapable of selfless concern for others. At this point her attraction to Ted is that of a flirt, for she admires his appearance, and his strength in rescuing Tommie, and, as she realizes he is the young man she thinks Ailsa will marry, '[h]er breast was lifted with a little sigh' (I:263). Artfully, in suggesting that she should nurse Tommie at St Gilbert's, '[p]erfidious little' (II:76) Mary has contrived that Ted, as his mentor, should also stay, while her wholehearted pursuit of an alliance between Ailsa and Amyot leaves her own way clear.

Playing her role as nurse, Mary claims that she 'had felt different' (II:77) since becoming twenty-one, and 'put away childish things' (II:78), but it is only when Ted becomes gravely ill that her maturing emotions allow her to love truly, and she ceases

acting as a nurse and truly becomes one, tending him at Rose Farm. Her ‘half-shy merriment’ (II:185) is an indication that she is beginning to realize that with Ted she is operating on a deeper level than her teasing flirtation with Tommie. Depicted sitting at her bedroom window in the moonlight, Mary admits to Ailsa that ‘I never intended to fall in love with a man without a penny’ (II:189), she has ‘cheeks not only pallid, but stained with tears which were dropping unheeded’, quite unlike the artful, artificial tears at Tommie’s accident. At last she realizes that with true love she ‘cannot help it...It is stronger than you’ (II:189), and that ‘[i]f he never looks at me I shall have loved him. He cannot hinder me from doing that’ (II:189). Mary has grown up, and Shaw now portrays her not as a chocolate-box beauty but a sensitive young woman, with ‘a radiance of joy’ (II:190) in her face, affirming to Ailsa ‘the peace and joy’ (II:190) her love for Ted has brought her. She is prepared to disobey her mother to remain near him, and, unlike the old Mary, is ‘very gentle, very quiet’ (II:193) in her determination. As Ailsa tells Mary, ‘[y]ou seem to have grown so much older!’, and she responds, ‘I feel older’ (II:195-196), Shaw is emphasizing to her Young Adult female audience that the ‘born coquette’ has matured into a loving young woman, with ‘maidenly dignity’ (III:94). Mary’s maturation could be well-illustrated by reference to two of the Pre-Raphaelite painter Sophie Gengembre Anderson’s paintings: *Young Girl Fixing her Hair* (mid- to late nineteenth century) shows a girl with a self-consciously knowing expression, very much as Shaw portrays the earlier Mary at her toilette. *Portrait of a Young Girl* (mid- to late nineteenth century), the girl gazing pensively into the distant moonlight, reminds us of Mary, ‘a radiance of joy’ (II: 190) on her face as a result of her realization of her love for Ted. These images may be found in Appendix 3:316. As we read a few pages further into this volume, of Ailsa’s intensely romantic encounter with Jack in the garden, we feel that from opposite extremes each girl is moving closer to perfect love.

Fittingly, it is Major and Mrs Stone who realize Mary’s true worth. We are told that her attention to Ted is ‘sharpened then by more than sisterly love’ (III:95), and that, as he begins to recover, ‘she had saved him’ (III:95). Major Stone likens Mary to his wife, for ‘[s]he would have done this when she was young’ (III:96). Shaw can offer no greater praise of Mary than this, and when Ted admits to Mrs Stone that he will not willingly let Mary return to London, but wants to marry her, we feel that, like the Stones, they will be inseparable. Whereas the immature Mary would have only



countenanced a romantic scene of proposal (such as Ailsa will find with Jack), the ‘gentle, helpful and good’ (III:113) young woman she has become no longer needs this. We are told that ‘there was not the passionate romance which Ted had once breathed [to Ailsa]’ (III:113), but ‘a manly assurance from an honest fellow...that he asked nothing better from life than to be allowed to go through it with [Mary] by his side’ (III:113), ‘a friend and a sweetheart’ (III:115). The emotional maturity gained by Mary has been prompted by observing Ailsa’s behaviour, and she tells Ted ‘I could not have loved you so well if I had not known Ailsa’ (III:114). Rather than Ailsa learning Mary’s ‘husband-catching craft’, Mary has learnt Ailsa’s steadfastness and integrity. The death of the Stones, hand-in-hand, allows Mary and Ted to take their place as the ideal lovers, ‘billing and cooing’ (III:277), (Major Stone’s pet name for his wife had been ‘Pigeon’) as the Stones had, and Mary whispers ‘I hope we may end so’ (III:123).

#### **8.10 Relationships with Society: The Ideology of Marriage and Empire: ‘the grace of womanhood’.**

In the first part of the previous section in this chapter my examination of Ailsa’s devotion to her father, her support for Jack Charteris as a soldier (rather than as a lover), and her abiding determination to save St Gilbert’s from sale showed that Shaw emphasizes to her Young Adult girl readers the importance of duty. As is apparent from my brief discussion about Shaw’s novels *Castle Blair* and *Hector*, she used her work for younger readers to expound on the role of the Victorian gentleman. In the men portrayed in *Colonel Cheswick’s Campaign* Shaw shows the roles of military, landowning and intellectual gentlemen to be different in detail but not in essence: each should strive to be ‘a man of honour’ (II:137). In this novel Shaw expanded her argument to guide Young Adult girls in their supporting role as sweethearts and wives of Empire-builders, and protectors of the genteel life style.

Ailsa is portrayed as the ideal (and idealistic) daughter of the Empire. Although she dreads the possible outcome of her father’s soldiering, she supports him wholeheartedly. When it appears that Colonel Cheswick’s debts may necessitate resigning his commission, she is adamant that their estates should be sacrificed first. She responds, ‘[y]ou resign your commission? Never! St Gilbert’s and everything must go first’ (II:19). Here we see how different her perception of the Colonel’s duty

is to that of Sweetie, who bitterly comments to Jack that '[Cheswick] wouldn't have the regiment neglected, whatever happened. He has always put the service before everything else' (II:158). Shaw presents Ailsa as the antithesis of her weak, ineffectual, intensely feminine step-mother, who can neither offer support for her husband at home or in his career. It is Jack who expresses the womanly ideal which Ailsa fulfils, for he tells her, 'you seem to efface yourself entirely, to have one wish with others' (II:81) and this selflessness she extends to all, from workers on the estate, to guests, and supremely, to her father. Jack observes that '[h]e leaves you for the war. You don't care for soldiering, you disapprove of the war, yet you have but one sincere wish, that he should go' (II:81). Despite this, Ailsa considers that she is not a dutiful daughter, for she questions everything, but she defends her right to do so, and Shaw's readers realize that Ailsa's is no blind duty, but results from a careful consideration of right and wrong. Shaw exemplifies Ailsa's empathy with others as an essential attribute of womanhood, for with it 'peace was in her hand' (II:100). Her readers could also interpret this as an affirmation and recommendation of Ailsa's support for the preservation of British imperial interests through her father's military career. Moreover the future role of Young Adult girl readers as mothers of gentlemen is promoted through Ailsa's advice to Lord Amyot, for he is totally unprepared for the 'great responsibilities attached to landed properties' (II:34). 'They only bewilder me; I haven't a notion how to meet them' (II:34), he tells her despairing, but Ailsa encourages him to learn by helping her run the St Gilbert's estate. Through Ailsa Shaw is encouraging her young readers towards their duty as wives and mothers: that they will help husband and son, '[t]o learn to do your duty in that sphere of life to which it has pleased God to call you' (II:35). Jack, we see ultimately, has been called to relinquish his fortune but maintain his duty as a gentleman by fulfilling his pledge to Cheswick to look after his daughter. Ted's destiny is to save Mary from a shallow life as a trophy wife, and instead, with her, to provide an exemplar of perfect, simple married life.

In the contrast she draws between the characters of Ailsa and Mary, Shaw offers her readers the empowerment to question the apparent inevitability of what society regards as a suitable marriage. Earlier in my chapter I have indicated that Shaw herself was unusual in remaining single and maintaining a career until more than fifty. Mrs Cheswick observes that Victorian expectations of male and female behaviour

were very different: ‘Society accepts a man without a woman...but it does not care at all for a woman without a man’ (I:85). Cheswick considers that engineering Ailsa’s marriage is ‘the only manner in which I can provide satisfactorily for her future’ (I:57). Shaw, having shown her readers the unsatisfactory relationships between Ailsa’s father and step-mother, and between Lord Exborough and his wife, appears at first to be consigning Mary to a similar fate. Mary, readers learn, ‘will probably have left home with sealed orders’ (I:96) to make sure of a marriage to Jack, the heir to a desirable fortune. Her mother is determined that, like her sisters, Mary will marry first for money and the position it will offer, with little concern for her daughter’s happiness. Arranged marriages of that sort, Shaw warns, may be disastrous, but with careful consideration of their daughter’s needs, a parent can guide them, and engineer a match which marries minds.

Knowing the characters of his daughter and of Jack intimately, Cheswick’s ‘campaign’ ensures that they are given the opportunity to learn about each other. Moreover Cheswick has entrusted his friend Lady Julia to conduct his campaign *in loco parentis* during his absence. The result is not a foregone conclusion, as Lady Julia admits, for ‘[t]o manage babies like Mary and her tribe of boys is one thing; to have a man such as Jack Charteris in your hand is quite another’ (III:5), while ‘she saw Alisa too going in the wrong direction’ (III:6). Lady Julia’s influence is portrayed by Shaw as benevolent, and her role as a caring mother-figure, sympathetic to the intellectual and emotional needs of a Young Adult girl, is one which Shaw promotes as desirable to her female audience. Subtly guided, Ailsa makes her own choice, after weighing up her perceived duty to her childhood companion (Ted), her inheritance (Amyot), and her father’s friend (Jack). She receives little support from her step-mother, whose own indecisive character and unsatisfactory marriage render her incapable of assessing Ailsa’s needs, or offering constructive advice. Her father’s second marriage has embittered him, and his admission to Ailsa that ‘[w]hat we seek in a woman is an interpreter of ourselves to ourselves, of our best to the world...we are usually doomed to disappointment’ (II:130) testifies to the enormity of the task ahead of a Young Adult girl, acquiring ‘the household virtues’ (II:100) to become a ‘ministering angel’ to her family.<sup>20</sup> The skill to support a husband, Cheswick insists, ‘is more than beauty, more than sense, it is the grace of womanhood’ (II:131). Shaw’s message to her audience is that, to fulfil their future roles as wives,

intelligence, independence, selflessness, and loyalty are necessary, and that these will lead to a happy marriage, and thus promote the ideology of Victorian society.

### 8.11 Identity and Selfhood

Physical and emotional maturation should bring with them the formation of an adult identity/selfhood. Fresh from the uncertainties of adolescence, Young Adult girls would welcome reassurance that they too will achieve a secure identity which will ensure their position within society. In my earlier chapters I have shown that the novelists whose work for this audience I have discussed were attempting to provide the advice and exemplars which could guide their Young Adult female audience towards making suitable choices, and achieving a fulfilling adult identity. As my section on relationships with society showed, in *Colonel Cheswick's Campaign* Shaw was promoting to her readers a public and private identity finely tuned to Victorian ideological constructs of womanhood. In creating an aspirational adult identity for her audience through Mary Howard, Shaw relied largely on depicting Mary's maturing attitude to love and romance. In Ailsa, however, she examines more minutely the progress of identity achievement.

When first we see Ailsa she seems much younger than her twenty-two years, although she is already carrying out her role as her father's agent in managing the estate, with a hatchet marking trees to be felled for timber. She is 'no princess, as the place seemed to demand, but a tall, fair girl plainly dressed in serge...shady hat, thick boots, and garden gloves' (I:6). We see that Ailsa is deeply upset by her task, and shows her trauma in an act of what might now be diagnosed as self-harm.<sup>21</sup> She feels powerless to prevent the destruction of the trees and, as '[s]omething like a quiver ran through her features at the striking of certain trees (I:7-8), she cuts her own arm. Shaw shows that this act is a considered decision rather than a sudden one, for 'very deliberately she rolled back her sleeve, looked for a moment at her own white arm, and struck herself with the hatchet a light blow which drew blood' (I:8). Her act discovered by Ted, she tries to hide it, both from him and later from her father, but has to admit that 'I – hurt myself...With the hatchet – accidentally...At least not accidentally' (I:45). Shaw reveals Ailsa, thought 'so strong' (I:46) by her self-occupied step-mother, to be as vulnerable as any of her audience might feel. Shaw indicates that Ailsa's behaviour stems from the particular stresses caused during her childhood and

adolescence by a father who was often absent, the early death of her mother, and her father's remarriage to the unmotherly Sweetie. Colonel Cheswick remembers that Ailsa's hatchet was an early gift, saying, 'I brought you this toy' (I:21). In responding that '[i]f we have toys we must pay for them' (I:21) readers may feel that Ailsa acknowledges both her father's part in her adolescent trauma, and her wish to move on from this to a positive, adult identity.

In finding her identity, and achieving selfhood, Ailsa changes the focus for her choice of future role. Early in the novel she 'would rather be a doctor than anything else in the world' (I:17), a ministering angel in its wider sense. However she takes to heart the advice given to her by Lady Julia (who acts, as we have seen, *in loco parentis* not only for Ailsa's father but also for the ineffectual Sweetie) and, guided also by her own maturing emotions, she accepts instead marriage to be her future, remaining at home to become that more specific manifestation of ministering angel, the Angel in the House. Lady Julia stresses that she must 'accept the responsibilities of your father's daughter...you are not free to indulge school-girlish notions (I:210), and Ailsa accordingly works through 'the emotions natural to her age' (II:101), and in the third volume, reaches her 'newly acquired consciousness' (III:66) of her identity.

Cheswick sees his daughter as a substitute for the son he never had. Ailsa is ever conscious of the differing perceptions men and women have of the world, and she reproves his interpretation of situations in the Empire, because his role as a soldier colours his reactions. She tells him that 'your sense as a man forces you to admit that the Egyptians have a grievance – as a soldier you want to go and kill them for it' (I:31). At first Cheswick constantly regrets Ailsa's gender, exclaiming '[i]f only you had been a boy' (I:32), and 'why were you not a boy?' (I:230), but as Ailsa demonstrates her great strengths he acknowledges her emergent identity as a woman. Ailsa combines the best male and female attributes, showing an 'uncommon common-sense' (II:13) rare, Cheswick contends, in women, and contrary to Sweetie's assertion that 'we women do not do our duty as we ought. I – I don't think, you know, that we can. I really don't think that it is in us' (I:49). However, because of her acceptance at the age of twenty of the responsibilities of the management of St Gilbert's, Ailsa's passage from girl to woman is not that of 'many girls of her age' (I:82), merely 'a succession of years as emptily civilized as the existence of a caged canary' (I: 82).

Because she resents Colonel Cheswick's irascible and selfish behaviour, Sweetie sees her step-daughter's independent mind as a shortcoming, and despairs that '[s]he is just like her father in that way she has of not even seeming to see the difficulties once she has made up her mind' (II:74).

Cheswick's changing attitude to his daughter reflects her developing identity, and he moves from calling her 'little woman' (II:20-21), and 'little daughter of Eve' (II:50), to responding to Ailsa's exclamation that 'were I a son – ', that 'I am glad that you are not. No son could be to me what you are' (II:50). I have shown that this may be a sublimated sexual wish of Cheswick's, but it is also a recognition of her role as a maturing young woman in whom, 'all the aspirations of his boyhood [were] all clear and new' (II:55). Charging Jack with the future care of Ailsa, Cheswick admits that '[s]he is the only human being in whom...I have confided the whole state of my affairs'. Later when confiding in Jack Cheswick records the scant regard which he, and we feel many other Victorian fathers, had for their daughters as children. He reflects that 'when she was a child I thought very little about her. She cost me at first my keenest sorrow' (II: 114), and wished for a son in the hope that his own shortcomings might be addressed in this way. He realizes that 'I had not been learning... to think highly of feminine capacity. A schoolgirl represented nothing to me but a creature who in due course must be married' (II:114). As Ailsa has matured as a young woman however, he is conscious that '[o]nly within the last year or two I have begun to realize that the girl I have is as well worth everything I might have done as any son, and infinitely dearer to me' (II:115). In his view '[s]he loves [St Gilbert's] with a double love. She has all the daughter's romantic attachment to the home of her childhood, and she has the son's respect for his father's inheritance...Head and heart are bound here' (II:117). After this realization he addresses Ailsa as 'my son' and calls her 'a man of honour' (II: 137), and expects 'no shilly-shallying and woman's weakness' (II:137) in thoughts of marriage. These statements place Ailsa above any other, her gender overcome by her maturing identity as an ideal woman, combining as she does, 'head and heart'.

When Jack before his departure to war offers his protection and pledge to Ailsa, we can see that Shaw's romantic imagery of the rose-bud opening to become a full-blown rose is as appropriate to Ailsa's maturing identity as to her developing love. Her

selfhood is about to flower, as she moves from identifying herself as her father's dependent daughter towards her own identity as an independent woman who will choose Jack as her lifelong companion. Shaw assures her Young Adult girl audience that Ailsa 'was growing fast and consciously' (III:12) and gives them, through her heroine, the possibility that they too will find that 'horizon after horizon' (III:12) will open up. Despite the traumas they may have to endure (in Ailsa's case she fears above all the death of her father), they like Ailsa can have 'the rich young faith in life...[which] helped her into the new stage of life' (III:15). Through her dissection of Ailsa's hopes and fears, Shaw is offering her readers a vicarious experience which will help establish their own maturing identity. It is an identity in which informed, independent choices can be made. This identity is not merely a position in society gained by the acquisition of a fortune or a title, but an internalized recognition of selfhood, reached by a process of emotional and intellectual maturation. We are shown physical proof that, after her father's death, Ailsa accepts her greater responsibilities, as she makes decisions and signs her own name 'in spaces waiting for his own signature' (III:155). Shaw also shows that Ailsa's emotional growth promotes her realization of her self identity, as 'little by little the conviction grew that the mastery of spirit over circumstance is a not a mere mirage' and '[l]ittle by little her pulses throbbed again to the young red blood of hope' ( III:198).

As she finally realizes that she could never marry Amyot, and writes to tell him so, Ailsa realizes that 'by her late act she had cut herself free' (III: 252). Aware that her young female readers might face such a situation themselves, Shaw painstakingly relates Ailsa's thoughts at this point. She is '[f]ree for what?' (III:252), and realizes that she is '[f]ree to aspire and to renounce' (III:253). She feels that it is 'right that she should be strong to rule her circumstances rather than she should dwarf herself any longer to patient compliance' (III:253). Her newly realized identity as an individual is expressed as she 'welcome[s]' her new life 'with all the reviving joy of youth, and faith, and hope' (III: 254), and, as a result, 'her own secret was revealed to her at last' (III:255): her love for Jack Charteris. Even her step-mother realizes that Ailsa is developing into 'a woman of the world' (III: 265) but it is not as a socialite, it is as a woman with an enviable identity of her own, and as a result, 'her wit was stimulated, her mind had become more flexible, her perceptions crystal clear' (III:265). We may postulate that when Shaw states that 'there is not a material

possession in the world which is worth the sacrifice of yourself' (III:273) it is not only Ailsa to whom the advice is given: it is Shaw's entire readership of Young Adult girls.

### **8.12 Conclusion: Is *Colonel Cheswick's Campaign* a Text for Young Adult Girls?**

Although it may not have achieved wide sales or lasting recognition, I consider that, for late nineteenth-century Young Adult girls, *Colonel Cheswick's Campaign* offered both an absorbing narrative and a vehicle through which they might address issues particularly relevant to them. In the unfolding experience of Ailsa Cheswick they were offered a resolution of problems particularly associated with a socially inexperienced, sensitive, shy, intelligent only daughter, whose intergenerational relationships are complex and often perplexing. Shaw's careful study of Ailsa's interaction with young men of her own age, and the reasons behind the decisions she makes about love, could empower readers to consider their own situation through their vicarious involvement in Ailsa's life. Through the character of Mary Howard, Shaw offers an alternative reading, showing how an apparently shallow, intensely socially-aware girl from a large family of daughters, can defy expectations and also find selfless, long lasting love. In this novel Shaw demonstrates that, although their experiences may be difficult and at times emotionally exhausting, Young Adult girl readers in situations similar to those of Ailsa and Mary might, like the characters, achieve self-knowledge and successfully establish an ideologically appropriate adult identity.

However in considering why *Colonel Cheswick's Campaign* faded so swiftly from public memory we may re-examine the approbation in *The Literary World* review of 1886 that Shaw's novel provided 'an oasis in the arid world of everyday fiction'. Although to that writer it recalled the type of fiction 'such as we used to enjoy before M. Zola and Mr. Henry James, Jr. took possession of their opposite poles of fiction', and it was this 'old-time quality' which adults might have enjoyed, as the twentieth century approached, many Young Adult girls, prospective 'New Girls', might have found it increasingly alien to their lives and aspirations.<sup>22</sup> Although Ailsa initially challenges society's expectations, and modifies them to suit her own life-choices, at the novel's end we see her, like Mary, contentedly domesticated, the preferred option of Victorian ideology. As Shaw herself demonstrated in her own journalistic career,



horizons were widening for young women, and inspiration and instruction for life as a 'New Girl' were to be found not in novels looking back to an 'old-time' but in a new genre of adventure and career books which reflected a new freedom and independence in which marriage was not an 'invariable destiny' for girls.

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<sup>1</sup> The title given by Elaine Showalter to her 1977 study of British novelists from Brontë to Lessing.

<sup>2</sup> An unattributed criticism quoted in Darton (1999:28).

<sup>3</sup> *The Nineteenth Century*, vol. 20 1886:524.

<sup>4</sup> Obituary in *The Times*, January 28<sup>th</sup>. 1929.

<sup>5</sup> For example *Lectures on Art* (1880), delivered 1870, *Fors Clavigera* (1871).

<sup>6</sup> Bradley (1997:77).

<sup>7</sup> Also in the series are Mrs. C. V. Jamison's *Lady Jane*, (an American book of the 1890s), Frances E. Crompton's *The Gentle Heritage* (1893), and a story by Louisa M. Alcott, *Eight Cousins*.

<sup>8</sup> Patricia Demers' anthology of children's literature published between 1850 and 1900, *A Garland from the Golden Age* (1983) includes a short passage from *Castle Blair*.

<sup>9</sup> Others included Charlotte M. Yonge's *The Monthly Packet*.

<sup>10</sup> At <http://www.archive.org/details/hectorstory00lugaiala>.

<sup>11</sup> A Norwegian translation published in 1909, *Barnene paa Castle Blair: En fortælling for barn*, oversat av M. Lysholm, Kristiania: H. Aschetoug & Co (W. Nygaard), may well have resulted from the nationalist aspirations of the Norwegian people. The Irish nationalist content would have resonated with their own campaign to break free of Swedish rule, an outcome which they had achieved four years earlier.

<sup>12</sup> The detail of the mills was based on Shaw's protracted visits to Waltham Abbey where her long-standing friend Colonel Charles Brackenbury was superintendent of the Royal Gunpowder Mill. Shaw lived with Brackenbury's family at Aldershot and Waltham Abbey in the role of housekeeper-governess. She became a quasi-filial close friend of Brackenbury, consulting him on her problems, and in the later 1880s he used his contacts to try to advance her career in journalism. (E. M. Lloyd, 'Brackenbury, Charles Booth (1831–1890)', rev. Roger T. Stearn, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3159>, accessed 12/1/ 2009].

<sup>13</sup> Typically:  
'Flora L. Shaw. Colonel Cheswick's Campaign, a Novel, 16mo, \$1.25; Castle Blair, 16mo, \$1.00 ; Hector, 16mo, \$1.00; Phyllis Browne, 16mo, \$1.00; A Sea Change, 16mo, \$1.00'.

<sup>14</sup> It appears in the annual listing for libraries (variously the 'Catalogue of English Prose Fiction and Books for the Young' or 'Juvenile Books') in Chicago (Illinois) and Boston, Haverhill, Greenfield, Salem and Worcester in Massachusetts, and the catalogue of the Young Men's Christian Association in Providence, Rhode Island.

<sup>15</sup> Jones (1891).

<sup>16</sup> Leypoldt and Iles (1895). Of Shaw's novels only *Castle Blair* and *Hector* have an accompanying review.

<sup>17</sup> Dorothy O. Helly and Helen Callaway, 'Lugard, Dame Flora Louise, Lady Lugard (1852–1929)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38618>, accessed 12/1/2009].

<sup>18</sup> A detailed discussion of alternative families in children's literature can be found in Thiel, E. (2008) *The Fantasy of Family: Nineteenth-Century Children's Literature and the Myth of the Domestic Ideal*, Abingdon and New York: Routledge

<sup>19</sup> Each of the volumes which constitute the Longmans, Green & Co. three-volume edition of *Colonel Cheswick's Campaign* number from page one, therefore page references are to the volume and then the page within that volume.

<sup>20</sup> George Elgar Hicks: *Woman's Mission* (1863), *Companion of Manhood*: a triptych comprising *Guide of Childhood*, *Companion of Manhood*, *Comfort of Old Age* (Appendix 3:322), which *The Times* described as representing 'woman in three phases of her duties as ministering angel'

<sup>21</sup> Explained on medical websites as 'a way of expressing deep emotional feelings, or problems, that build up inside'. (<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Self-injury/Pages/Introduction.aspx> [accessed 20/08/09] ).

<sup>22</sup> L.T. Meade's novel *Polly: A New-Fashioned Girl* (1889) was a deliberate reference to Louisa May Alcott's character Polly, in *An Old-Fashioned Girl* (1870). In 1904 Mary Ann Broome used the term 'New Girl' in her book *Colonial Memories*.

## Young Adult Girls and their Reading:

### Chapter 9

#### Conclusions

‘The true reader is essentially young...The great season for reading is the season between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four...’

Virginia Woolf, ‘Hours in a Library’  
(1916, 1975:24-25)

Herself a voracious reader from an early age in her father’s eclectic library, Virginia Woolf refers to her experience as a Young Adult girl reader in her essay ‘Hours in a Library’, first published in the *Times Literary Supplement* of November 30<sup>th</sup> 1916. It was, she says, ‘...this orgy of reading (26). In identifying these years as ‘the great season for reading’, Woolf recognizes both that distinct group of readers, young adults, and their new-found ability to choose their own reading. Compared with their access to childhood reading, she feels, as young adults, ‘[f]or the first time, perhaps, all restrictions have been removed, we can read what we like; libraries are at our command, and, best of all, friends who find themselves in the same position’ (26). We may reasonably assume that Woolf is writing about her own experience as a Young Adult girl reader, when she describes this as ‘...a time of extraordinary excitement and exaltation’ (26).

The response of readers to their books and the intricacies of their resulting relationship with the production of fiction have long intrigued critics and theorists. In both sets of essays she published as *The Common Reader* (1925 and a second set in 1932) Woolf quotes from Samuel Johnson’s *Life of Gray* (1781):

‘ . . . I rejoice to concur with the common reader; for by the common sense of readers, uncorrupted by literary prejudices, after all the refinements of subtilty and the dogmatism of learning, must be generally decided all claim to poetical honours.’

DR. JOHNSON, *Life of Gray*

(Woolf, 1935: title page)

The ‘common reader’ is a term used by Johnson to identify those who were literate rather than literary, and who read for their own private pleasure and instruction. As I hope I have shown, since Johnson’s time many have attempted to dictate what the common reader *ought* to read, while fewer have studied what s/he has *actually* read.

In quoting Johnson, and using ‘the common reader’ as her title, Woolf also acknowledges the need of readers to disassociate themselves from all such advice on suitable reading. In the opening paragraph of the final chapter of the *Second Series*, which she calls ‘How Should One Read a Book?’, she states that, ‘the only advice, indeed, that one person can give another about reading is to take no advice, to follow your own instincts, to use your own reason, to come to your own conclusions’ (1935:258). She continues:

To admit authorities, however heavily furred and gowned, into our libraries and let them tell us how to read, what to read, what value to place upon what we read, is to destroy the spirit of freedom which is the breath of those sanctuaries.

(258)

We see that Woolf understands the interactive relationship between author and reader from her statement in her penultimate paragraph that, ‘[t]he standards we raise and the judgments we pass steal into the air and become part of the atmosphere which writers breathe as they work’ (269) .

My study has shown that from 1750 to 1890 Young Adult girls read novels which could offer them the vicarious experience of passing from an inexperienced immaturity towards an adulthood in which the selfhood of female protagonists, their relationships to family, lovers, to the prevailing ideology and to society are resolved. It is evident that what girls read sometimes conflicted with what girls were told to read. We have seen that even

Richardson was disapproved of by Catherine Macaulay, while Hannah More railed against ‘seducing books’. Nevertheless it seems that Young Adult girls sought them, and therefore the writers I have discussed incorporated advice into entertaining, engaging and overtly pleasurable texts. Undeterred by the warnings constantly issued by the parents, educationalists and critics of their time against ‘frivolous reading’, it is evident that these girls read novels, and that some read avidly. Within those novels for which I have identified a substantial Young Adult female readership I have shown that they possibly sought and certainly could find advice *designed* by their writers to aid their readers’, particularly their young female readers’, life-choices. It is also evident that by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, those life-choices for women had expanded so much that the some of the audience of Young Adult girls were turning away from novels which promoted marriage as the desired goal, seeking instead the new frontiers, both geographical and social, that were rapidly becoming available in the novels of writers such as Bessie Marchant and L.T. Meade.

Writing about Maria Edgeworth’s ‘Angelina’, one of her *Moral Tales for Young People* (1801), Mitzi Myers suggested that an ‘educative fiction’ (1989:31) for teenagers emerged in this book. Myers asserts that,

No matter how "new realistic" modern young adult fiction gets, it always subsumes within its grittiness some of the romance that is part of our cultural construction of adolescence. In Angelina's maturation, then, we can see the emergent contours of the typical young adult plot structure, which always seems to be a *Bildungsroman* at bottom—a form definitionally problematic (as a wilderness of scholarship attests), yet intuited by readers and always intuited as educational, its narrative center a prototypical adolescent who must somehow mature, or begin to.

(32)

As the overall title of the collection indicates, Edgeworth was writing ‘for Young People’, and in ‘Angelina’ offers a strategy for girls led astray by their novel reading. As interesting as her young readers might have found these tales, we may surmise that their curiosity about life typical of Young Adult girls encouraged them to seek novels through which they might attempt to satisfy their concerns about adult life in greater depth.

In researching my subject it has become clear that although the physiological and psychological bases for identifying adolescence as a distinct maturational phase were codified as late as 1904 (by Hall), the recognition of a post-childhood but pre-adult state is evidenced as early as the fourteenth century, in the activities surrounding apprenticeship. Moreover, although it is principally male experience which is recorded, there is evidence that a type of behaviour characteristic of Young Adult girls was acknowledged not only through the instructional writing produced in successive centuries for young people. We see this 'awkward age' in the fictional portraits of unruly, unhappy or uncertain eighteenth- and nineteenth-century young women such as Richardson's Harriet Byron, Burney's Evelina, Radcliffe's Adeline or Shaw's Ailsa, as well as in the anti-heroines of Wood and Braddon. These fictional young women are all seeking reassurance about their concerns about identity and relationships, and their future role in society.

I have also shown that the primary evidence of Young Adult girls reading (including their own written records, and their responses to surveys) reflects through successive centuries not only the ideology derived from the socio-political background of their times, but also an opportunity to formulate their own responses through an interpretation of fictional texts. It is clear that this in turn influenced the authors and the publishers who sought to provide the material, the *Bildungromans*, by means of which this young female audience might negotiate their own journey to adulthood. The popularity of subscription and circulating libraries in the earlier years covered by my thesis, and the development of publishers' lists categorizing this type of novel as a 'Young Lady's Library' in the later nineteenth century both reveal the extent to which the succeeding generations apparently sought and were supplied with these novels, their access increasing as the access of the 'common reader' to education improved. Following the influence which eighteenth-century educationalists attempted to bring to bear on girls' reading, nineteenth-century critics sought also to analyse the reading popular with this audience, an approach extended retrospectively and with a wider remit by twentieth-century and later theorists and historians of reading practice.

In examining the specific texts read and recommended I have revealed not only the extent to which these novels may be seen to be, in Smollett's words, 'inlisting the passions on the side of virtue', but also the skill of each author in transmitting social instruction by '[t]he imaginative application of the narrative mode' providing for readers both 'good stories', and 'gripping drama' (Brunner, 1986:13). Some of these novels, notably *Sir Charles Grandison* and *East Lynne*, remained the favourite reading of several generations of Young Adult girls, though, as I have shown, in the final decade of the nineteenth century this audience, with a growing acknowledgement of their access to a career rather than marriage, increasingly sought fiction which addressed their greater independence. It is perhaps the Gothic novel which continues particularly to engage Young Adult girls today, both in its earliest form, for example *The Romance of the Forest*, and in early parody such as *Northanger Abbey*. In the later nineteenth century it flourished particularly in short-story format, with notable female exponents such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman in 'The Yellow Wallpaper' (1892) and several Edith Nesbit tales, such as 'John Charrington's Wedding' (1891). We may also observe it alive and well in countless twentieth- and twenty-first-century reinventions, morphing from terror to horror fairly indiscriminately. These range from Daphne du Maurier's novel *Rebecca* (1938), reminiscent of *Jane Eyre*, through stories such as Angela Carter's *The Lady of the House of Love* (1979), to Scholastic's multi-authored *Point Horror* series (1988-2005) and more recently to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, with a film and TV series (1992-2003) and associated comics and graphic novelizations (from 1998). The particularly imaginative and visual form in which women writers in the Gothic genre expressed the conflict between inner and outer selfhood has always appealed to young female readers. Where fairy tales, originally intended for an adolescent and adult audience, had allowed their readers to confront their social and sexual fears through magic and monsters, so, as those tales increasingly became considered only suitable for the nursery, the Gothic novel offered this resolution through mystery and terror.

In the light of my discussion of the *early history* of fiction for Young Adult girls, it is interesting to consider assertions about twentieth- and twenty-first-century, *current*, young adult fiction. Alderson asserted, as we saw in Chapter 6, that it is distinguished by

its 'social awareness', and the remarks by Hammond which Alderson quotes alleged that authors in the second half of the twentieth century had 'predetermined instructional ends' (Butts & Garrett, 2006: 208-9). We may ask whether such opinions upheld in the work of a late twentieth/twenty-first-century author such as Melvin Burgess. Walsh (in Pinsent, (2004:142) states that 'Burgess is a controversial British writer who...explor[es] taboo areas of experience'. Burgess himself feels that '[w]e need to protect [children] from being over-protected' (BBC interview, 2001, quoted in Pinsent). Walsh identifies that he avoids the kind of didacticism which Peter Hunt (2001:5) states 'holds that children's books must be moral and educational' (in Pinsent, 2004:146). However his intention is that his adolescent readers should, through the use of multiple first person narratives, encounter different perspectives on the same moral questions, and form their own opinion about which should be accepted or rejected. Although his work is often shocking, it addresses serious issues which concern adolescents, in a language and style which they themselves use. Not only is it truly representative of its time and the issues of adolescent and young adult culture, it encourages its readers to examine the core truths at its heart and make an informed decision of their own. The absence of a discrete section detailing the moral of his stories in no way indicates that Burgess' intentions are in essence any less didactic than those of Richardson or Radcliffe. Like the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century works I have considered, his novels fulfil all the criteria of reception/reader-response theory and of cultural materialism, while the market for them certainly reflects the 'social and cultural conditions' which Finkelstein and McCleery consider paramount in the study of Book History. In novels such as *Lady: My Life as a Bitch* (2001) Burgess' young adult fiction is as attuned to its readers as was that intended for Young Adult girls two centuries earlier.

The ability offered by fiction successfully to encounter, control and overcome the fears associated with the move from pre-adulthood into maturity is dependent on the reader responding to and interacting with the text. While the epistolary novel immersed its readers in the minutiae and immediacy of its action, female writers of Gothic novels provided opportunities for a more active involvement, a possibility to carry their Young Adult readers along with their Young Adult heroine to face mystery, terror (and sexual



harassment) before revealing the complex but inevitably rational solution to some of their problems. With the development of the sensation novel we have seen that readers followed a pattern of clue and detection from which they could endeavour to reach their own solution to the plotted mystery. In *East Lynne* Young Adult girl readers could follow the progress of infatuation, of love, of passion, despair and resolution through the experiences of its female protagonists as their lives are affected by the unravelling of a murder plot. Similarly Lady Audley's secret is gradually revealed to them as they interpret the clues within the text, allowing the opportunity to acquire not only the skills to solve a fictional mystery, but to 'read' and act upon those clues which could allow them to make their own appropriate life-choices.

By the 1880s these life-choices, widening beyond the role of the perfect wife and mother – the 'angel in the house' – needed representation in novels which could expand the horizons of their young female readers. I have shown that, however well-recommended and publicised, and however engaging the plot, many young women were no longer satisfied with the future offered them in ideologically-conservative novels such as *Colonel Cheswick's Campaign*. The willingness of the British 'New Girl' to sit at home and await the return of her soldier lover or husband to support her nation's imperialist aspirations was decreasing. Instead she wanted an active role, for example as a nurse, a doctor (Ailsa's future of choice) or, like Shaw herself, a foreign correspondent. Accordingly, from the 1880s onwards stories for teenage girls proliferated, in economically-priced series such as Humphrey Milford's 'The Girl's New Library', increasingly focusing on school, college and career rather than merely romance and marriage. Among these authors were Bessie Marchant, E. L. Haverfield and Katharine Tynan. Angela Brazil, whom Cadogan and Craig call 'the chronicler *par excellence* of schoolgirls' adventures' (1986:49), published her first title in 1906, following it with a further fifty by 1947. The Great War further increased opportunities and independence for young women, in addition to severely depleting the numbers of marriageable young men. From 1918 school series, aimed at younger teenagers, flourished in the work of Dorita Fairlie Bruce, Elsie Oxenham and Elinor Brent Dyer, while for Young Adult girls, college and career stories offered an insight into new alternatives to marriage, options

further extended by the Second World War. This brings us to the date identified in the twenty-first-century overviews which I quoted earlier in my study: the claims that the emergence of literature for young adults postdates 1945. I have sought in my thesis to present the evidence to challenge this assertion.

It has become clear to me through my research into the development of a fiction for Young Adult girls that while society, ideology and expectations alter over the centuries, the issues which can confuse and concern that group of readers appear to change little. In their pursuit of inner selfhood and a public identity, in their need to know how to establish and retain relationships with society in general, and with family in particular, and in their desire for romance and fulfilment they benefit from accessible and credible role models. For those girls who could read, in 1750 those from a more affluent and/or educated background, by 1890 an ever-increasing number from more varied social groups, fiction could provide that advice and those role-models. Richardson, Burney, Radcliffe, Wood, Braddon and Shaw adapted their genres to engage and advise girls approaching adulthood. When Hardy's *Tess* claims that '[l]adies know what to fend hands against, because they read novels that tell them of these tricks' we may doubt that those who did not read novels were ignorant of the dangers which they might encounter. What we cannot doubt is that through their fiction these authors offered a means by which Young Adult girls might more confidently face their future.

Throughout the century and a half examined in my thesis, those novels which, through the heightened reality of their plots, and the engagement of their female protagonists, realistically explored the complexities of life-choices for their young audience were the YA fiction of their time. These works were the 'crossover' novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as assuredly as Salinger, Cormier, Pullman and Burgess are of the twentieth and twenty-first.

## APPENDICES

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